Metalsmith

Spring 89

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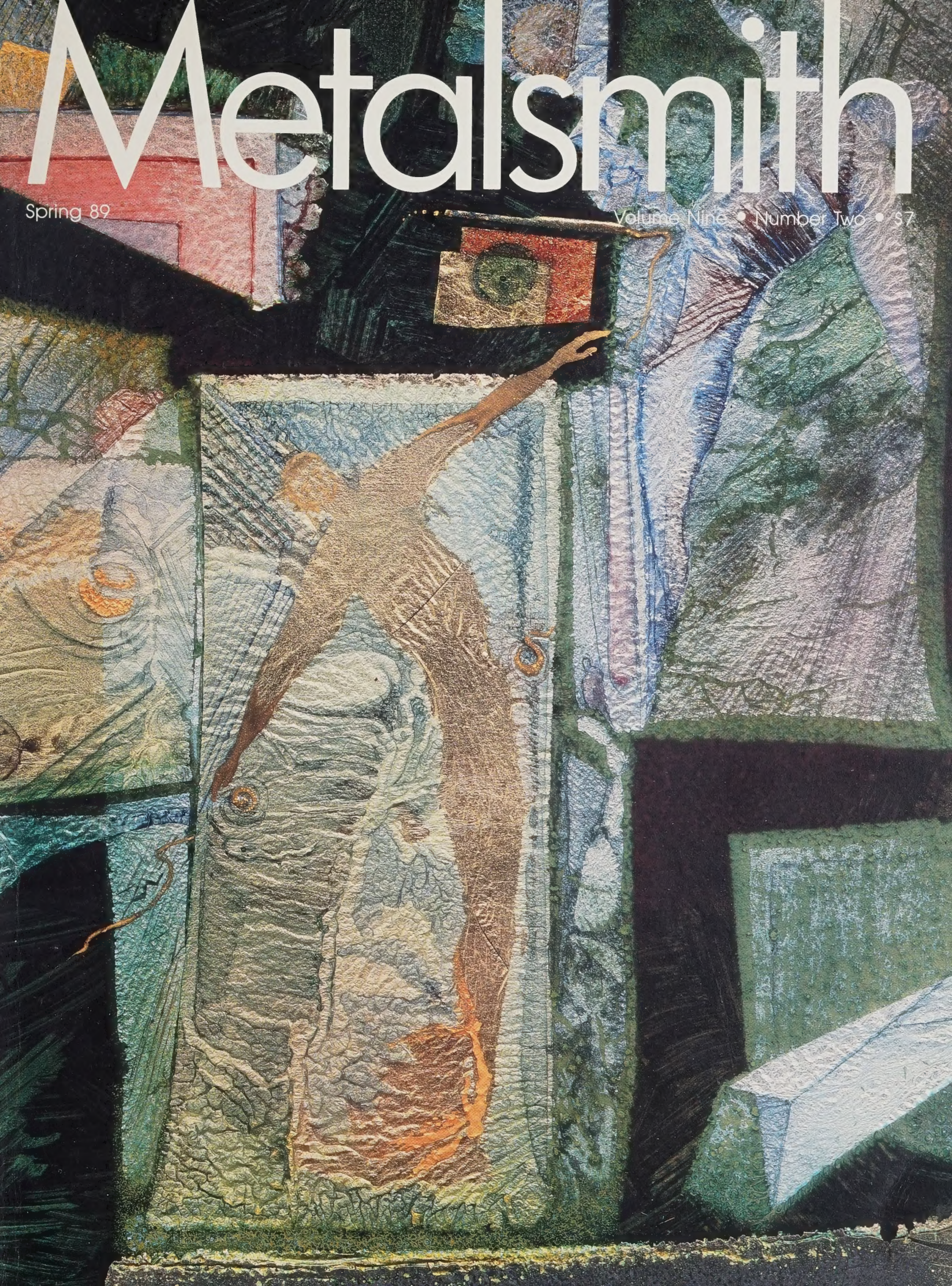

Lois Etherington Betteridge, *The Tangled Garden*,
(tip of the hat to J. E. H. MacDonald), copper partially silver plated, 13 cm h x 17 cm d, 1988. See page 22

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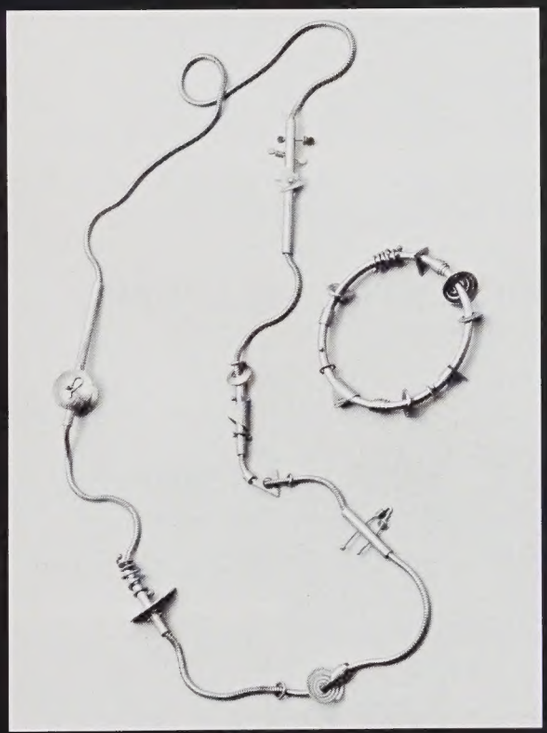

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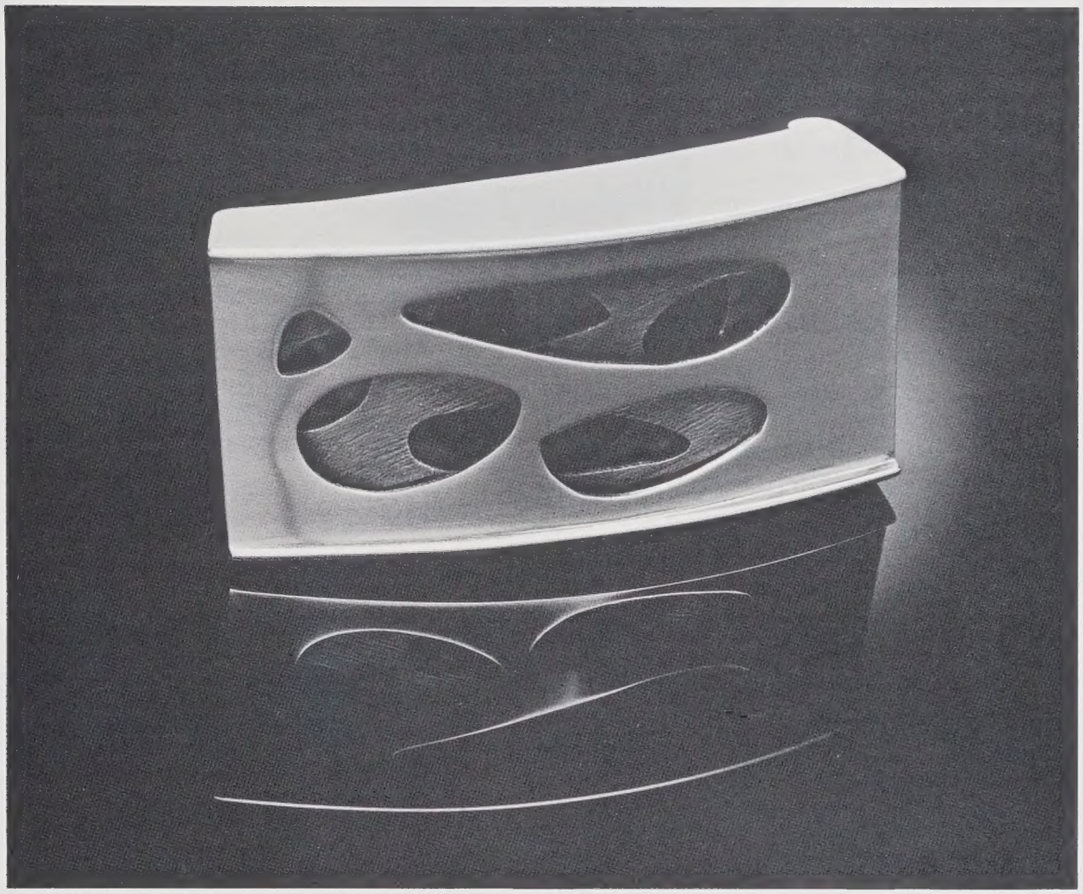

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Cover: Bill Helwig, *Alpha Omega* (detail), under-glaze, silver and gold foil with pure gold details. 8½″ d., 1983. Photo: Mel Mittermiller; **Above:** Richard Reinhardt, *Mysterious Passage* belt buckle, sterling silver, forged and fabricated, 2¾ x 1½ x ¾″. Photo: Wayne Cozzolino. See page 28

EDITORIAL

Last spring on our way through Baltimore, we stopped off at the Village of Cross Keys, an elegant shopping mall, to visit The Store, Ltd., owned and run by jeweler Betty Cooke. We were particularly interested to see Cooke's early work that had been shown in the renown exhibit of the 1950s at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and that had been illustrated in special issues of *Everyday Art Quarterly*, the museum's quarterly publication. We found that virtually half of The Store is devoted to the display of Cooke's jewelry. And it turns out that Cooke is still producing many of her early designs in gold and silver today as purely and meticulously as she did in the 1950s.

A few months later, when Betty sent us some pieces to have photographed for the article in this issue, we realized that we could not tell which were the original early pieces and which were the contemporary pieces. In fact, this made us ponder whether the early pieces were unique or produced in multiples. And then we wondered why this mattered? The jewelry is as fresh and compelling today as it was in the 50s when it was considered quintessential "good design." So, it doesn't really matter if there is one or a thousand pieces made of a design; what matters is the idea behind the design. If that is good, then the object is good. The quality and value lies not in the making of the object but in the thinking out of the problem and arriving at an, in this case, elegant, minimal, purist solution. In design, the artistry resides in the preconception of the form, not necessarily its fabrication. The emphasis on artistry in design thinking—that is, the working out of an idea to its full extent before beginning the process of making—is particularly relevant in the case of metal, as a metal object can take an inordinate amount of time to produce by hand. And often the final object reproduces the paper or wax model form, so working the metal has not added much to that core idea. Further, metal lends itself to working by tools and mechanical means, which allows the final object to avoid the need for the impression of the hand of the maker.

The other side of the question was argued by Walter Benjamin in his seminal essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Benjamin maintained that the act of reproduction denies art of its aura, depriving it of its singular place in space and time. Having an aura assumes evidence of an idiosyncracy that is peculiar to the artist and cannot be abstracted. Benjamin bemoaned modern society's efforts to get closer to an artwork, to dispell its aura and to overcome the uniqueness of its reality. Art has always had a tendency to move toward complexity and ambiguity, which derives from individual idiosyncracies. But to appeal to mass society, the complexity of art must be extracted so that the work is easier for a large segment of the population to understand and accept. For design to be successful, all idiosyncracies must be abstracted out. Design moves toward clarity, just as art for the masses moves towards clarity.

So, there are two distinct points of view concerning the making of objects—that of a preconceived, problem-solving approach that results in an understandable, accessible object and that of an idiosyncractic, individualistic and elitist work that distances itself through mystery and ambiguity.

It is instructive to consider the work in this issue—Lois Betteridge's controlled whimsy in her geometric coffeepots, Richard Reinhardt's deft fabrication of jewelry from the interaction of silver line and plane, Christian Schmidt's cast pod-and mushroom-shaped pendants and Bill Helwig's dense and luminous enamel surfaces—and to ponder which direction the maker had in mind.

—SB

Metalsmith

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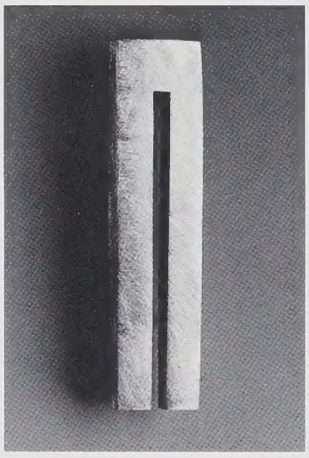

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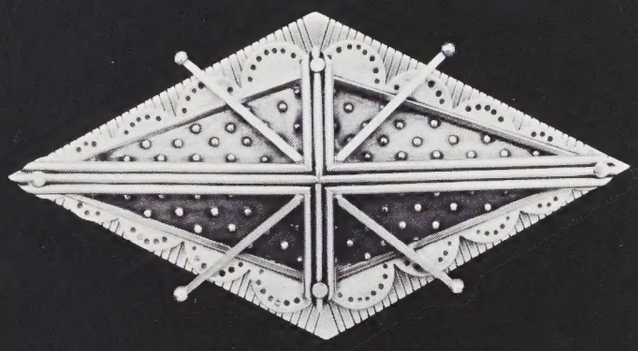

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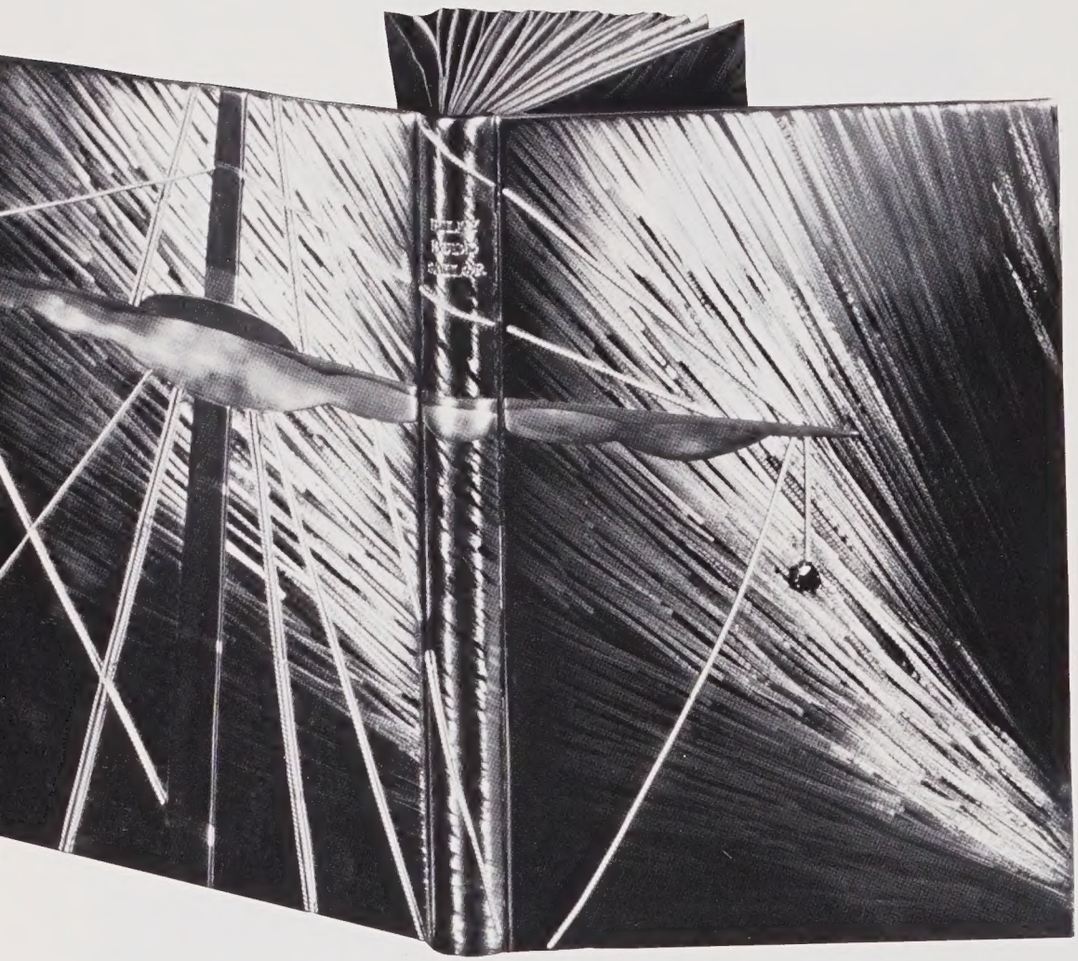


Benjamin and Deborah Alterman, Unique fine binding for Married Mettle Press Limited Edition of Herman Melville's *Billy Budd Sailor*, married metal, sterling silver wire, sapphire, 14k gold, gilded bronze, 23.9 x 16.25 x 2.2 cm.

by Elizabeth Skidmore Sasser

When "collectors'" bookstores are visited today, dates and editions are investigated, authors' signatures, illustrations, the quality of paper, the choice of type and the manner of binding but, the association of metalwork with book art is rarely considered, and even more rarely found. This has not always been the case. Shrines, known as *cumdachs*, were fashioned of metal by the Celts to hold Gospel manuscripts, which were regarded as objects of reverence. About 1000 AD on Loch Erne, a bronze box with a silver veneer was made to house a Gospel book associated with the sixth-century holy man St. Molaise. In an entry at the end of the British Museum's *Gospel Book of Lindisfarne*, it was noted that ". . . Billfrith, the hermit, forged the outer metalwork and set the gold and gems in it . . ."

A reunion of book art and metal appeared in 1987 at the Thomas J. Watson Library of The Metropolitan Museum of Art as "Bound to Vary," a Guild of Book Workers Exhibition of Bindings on the Married Mettle Press Limited Edition of *Billy Budd, Sailor*. Each of 17 guild members was given an unbound copy of Melville's last masterpiece in an edition that was handmade, at every step of the process, by Benjamin and Deborah Alterman, owners of Married Mettle Press, Papermill, and Bindery. The name of the press is explained as follows: According to Joseph Moxon's *Mechanick Exercises on the Whole Art of Printing* (1683-4), a journeyman could be fined for referring to type as "lead" rather than "mettle" (as metal was spelled in those days). Founders wanted it to be understood that their type had mettle. In the early days of metalworking it was discovered that when pieces of different metals perfectly mate, they can be married with heat and pressure. The Altermans explain that their own wish is to produce books in which each component has true "mettle" and "where every element marries to create a meaningful work of craft and art."

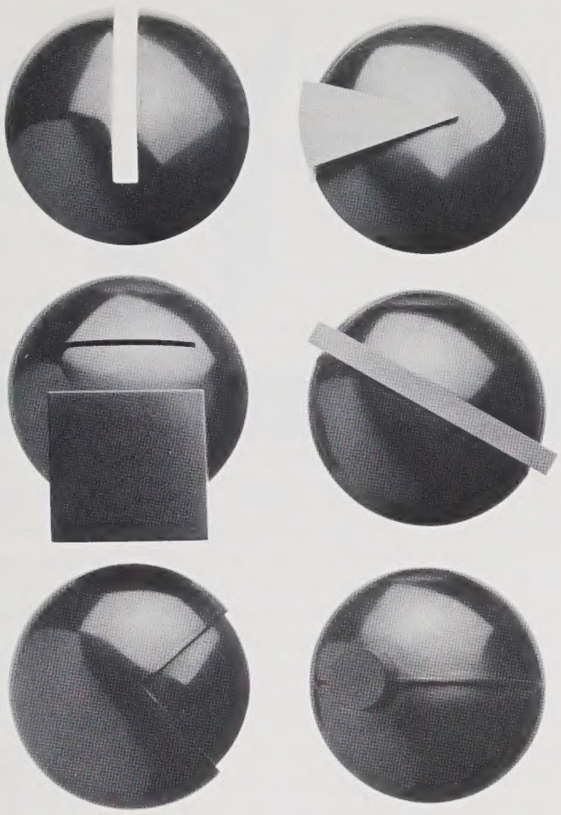
The bindings crafted by the participants for the handmade edition of *Billy Budd, Sailor* illustrate many aspects of "style, structure, and interpretation." Some of the bookbinders are well known; some belong to an older generation; others are at the beginnings of their careers. Although representing different national traditions in bookbinding and individual preferences, each exhibitor has presented an example of contemporary design and craftsmanship at its best.

The Altermans' one-of-a-kind, collector's copy of *Billy Budd, Sailor* forges a link with the medieval goldsmith who worked with gold and inlaid gemstones in order to furnish churches with reliquaries and the jeweled covers for the Gospels. The Alterman binding is described in its caption in the catalog of the exhibition as: "Sewn with a herringbone stitch onto doubled linen cords laced through wooden boards hinged to a bronze spine with etched title. Shapes of married metal (fine silver, jeweler's bronze, and copper), twisted sterling silver wire, and a 1½ carat sapphire set in 14 kt. gold on a ground of textured gilded bronze. All of the above riveted with more than one hundred hidden silver rivets to the cross-laminated walnut boards with walnut burl interiors. Endsheets marbled by the binders . . ."

Suitable as the burl interiors of the boards are, it is almost a pity to hide the rivets, which, in their precise detailing (the silver rivets are joined to the underside of each metal piece using a special torch that produces a 6000-degree flame from the tip of a hypodermic needle) stand out like the stars that guided the course of mariners during the long nightwatches. Spread across the front and back of the cover, a cross, formed by "a canting yard and mast with a web of taut ropes," is lifted above the gleaming rays of the rising sun. The artists have written of their choice of a sapphire, set in gold prongs at the end of a rope of twisted silver wire in these words: "The use of a gem to represent Billy Budd was suggested by the lines: 'A jewelblock they'll make of me tomorrow,/ Pendant pearl from the yardarm end . . .' Elsewhere Billy is referred to as 'the jewel of 'em.' A pearl, diamond, or emerald might have been more pleasing, but these would not have offered the strong, riveting effect of high contrast. The sapphire may seem black at first, as may the story itself. On closer inspection, however, it is the deepest transparent blue, like 'welkin-eyed' Billy's spirit, like the deep unobstructed sky."

The unique binding of *Billy Budd, Sailor* by the Altermans has not only brought about a technical union of married metals but a unity of interpretation, in the sensitive visual treatment of Melville's tale of triumph of innocence and goodness over the darkness of evil. Benjamin Alterman says that he and Deborah "envisioned [the cover] as a 'treasure binding' reminiscent of a lectern bible," embellished with gold and precious gems, those luminous ornaments that the medieval artists and metalsmiths called beautiful because they conveyed an insight into perfection of the cosmos.

The exhibition "Bound to Vary" has been traveling around the United States since 1987 and will make its last stop at the Renwick Gallery, Washington, D.C. from April 7 to August 13, 1989. A 64-page catalog with color illustrations of the various guild members' bindings is available. Elizabeth Skidmore Sasser is a Professor of Architecture at Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX and a contributing editor to Metalsmith.



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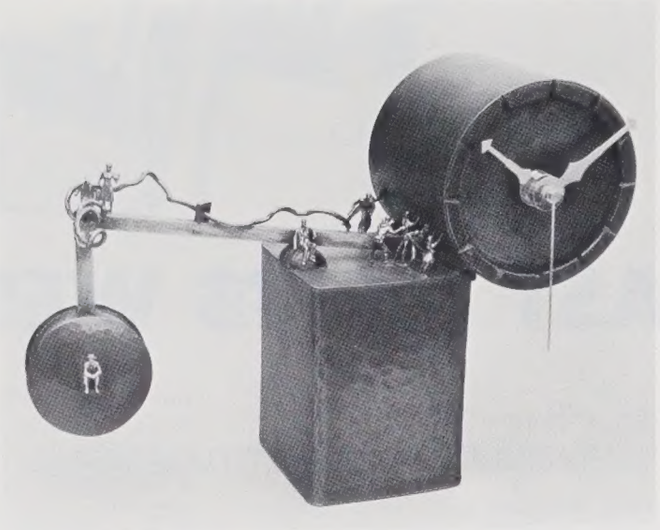

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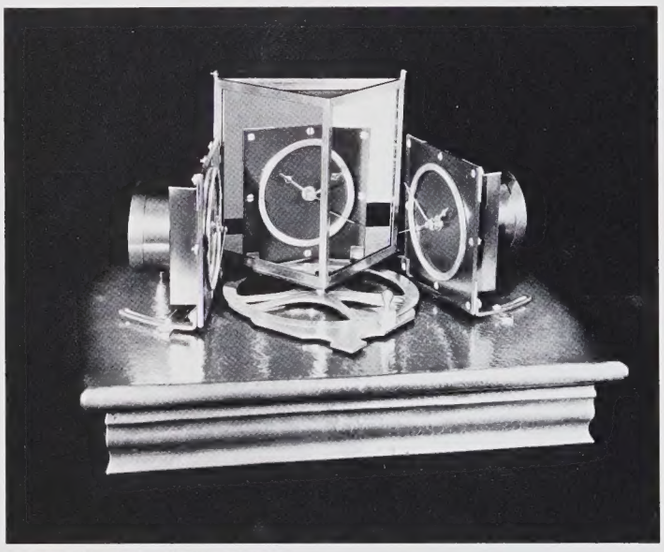

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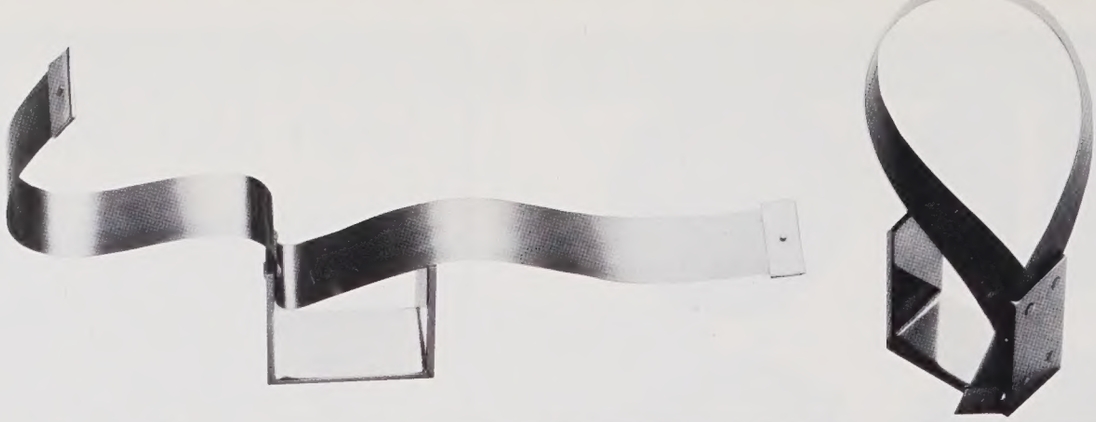


EAST MEETS WEST

by Deborah Norton

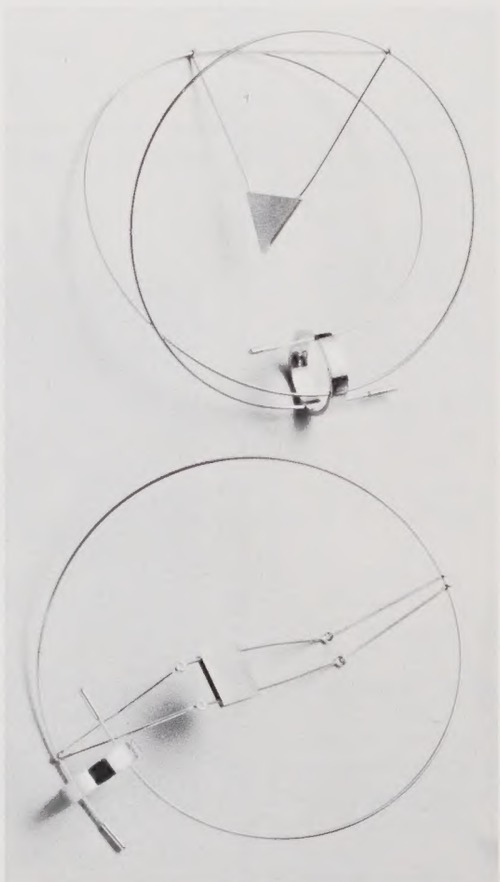
Undeniably, American crafts of the 20th century have been influenced by Japanese esthetics. From raku to mokumé, American crafts would not be what they are today without the Japanese connection. So, when I moved to Japan two years ago, I was eager to trace the roots of this influence and to see how that country's craft movement has developed in recent times.

Although I visited many small galleries, my search actually began and ended in the department stores of Tokyo, institutions which make Harrods or Macy's seem inadequate. With as many as 12 floors and always at least one art gallery, if something cannot be found in a "Depaato" the Japanese might politely suggest that it is wiser to rethink why you are looking for it. A newspaper announcement of an exhibition, of perhaps a 12th-generation metalsmith—maybe even a son of a Living National Treasure, would send me scurrying off, expecting a profound esthetic experience. Instead, with few exceptions, what I would find would be an exhibition of immaculately fabricated objects, usually for the tea ceremony, which were almost identical to those made 12 generations ago. The pieces would inevitably be superficially beautiful but, lacking a depth of feeling that must certainly have been present in their first incarnation, they were lifeless. It was obvious that the metalsmith's reason for creating the work was not to express a personal statement, as in the West, but to express universal beauty in the traditional Japanese manner.

In the States, I was frequently forced to debate the proposition that today's metalsmiths are inferior to their forebearers because they are incapable of creating the exquisite work of Fabergé or that of the great goldsmiths of the Renaissance. Now, confronted with a craft movement that only seemed capable of recreating the past, all I could think of was—I told you so.

Many exhibitions later, and just as I was giving up hope, I saw a notice for a juried exhibition sponsored by the Jewelry Designer's Association promising 603 unique pieces of jewelry. And sure enough, here at last was a show of truly contemporary work, using everything from titanium to cement, and even including several nonwearables. Yet, with a few superb exceptions the work here was as lifeless as its traditional counterparts. Surprisingly, I found the explanation for this in the bilingual catalog. A statement by juror Kenji Ekuan was awkwardly translated to read, "A good work has originality and can be used every day, and not be too individualistic in order to show its identity and lose its concern for the wearer."

And then it all made sense. Imagine a work of art in America being condemned for being too individualistic. But here in Japan, where conformity is highly prized and individualism is considered an antisocial act, where drawing attention to oneself in any way is avoided and personal feelings are rarely expressed, it was perfectly logical. Creating a piece of contemporary jewelry that is a personal expression of the artist's vision is antithetical to the Japanese mentality and was beyond the scope of most of the exhibitors. Many pieces displayed more gimmickry than creativity and were clumsy and awkward, probably reflecting their creators' discomfort in working in this mode. Because the artists must have had a difficult time envisioning someone individualistic enough to actually wear these experimental pieces, the work often did not clearly relate to the human body. I think it is only because jewelry has no tradition in Japan that these artists dared attempt to work in a contemporary style at all. When it comes to other forms of metalwork, the traditional standards are rarely, if ever, challenged.



Above: Jun Muramatsu, *Rings*, 18k gold, sterling silver, stainless steel wire, **Top:** Yoshimi Seky, *Rings*, 18k gold, sterling silver, stainless steel wire

Now switch to America. On my rare trips back to the States, I hunger for metalwork that contains ideas and personal statements, that is a vehicle for expression or provocative investigations—words that are interspersed throughout *Metalsmith*'s pages. But I also find myself looking at crafts somewhat differently today than I used to. Rather than taking it for granted that an object will contain the aforementioned qualities (and perhaps reading into it more than is actually there), I assume nothing and wait for a piece to metaphorically speak to me. Sometimes it does and I leave an exhibition with my appetite momentarily sated. But far too often, I find myself confronted with a piece that reminds me of the classic party bore who never stops talking (it contains the latest design motifs, the most "in" materials and the newest techniques), but has nothing to say. And then I wonder, if the artist had no personal statement to make (and it is unlikely that a contemporary American metalsmith would try to express universal beauty), why was this made?

If more metalsmiths asked themselves a similar question before they picked up their tools and did not actually begin a new piece until they came up with the correct answer—"Because I have something to say"—I think the quality of American metalwork would be significantly enhanced. As for Japanese metalsmiths, with their refined technical ability and acute sensitivity to materials, if they were to spend some time in a society such as America, which fosters originality and creativity, their potential would be unlimited.

Deborah Norton is a writer, now living in London, who spent two years in Japan. She is a contributing editor to Metalsmith.

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ART & TECHNICS

by Tim McCreight

Recently, while I was waiting in a checkout line of a department store, my eye was caught by a large display of baseball cards. There were several kinds of packages on the shelf, but the grandest was a box large enough to hold two *Manhattan Yellow Pages*. It was labeled the "Deluxe Complete Baseball Card Collecting Kit" and contained 200 of the 'best' baseball cards. When I was a kid, you would have had to chew close to a pound of stale pink gum to get that many cards. Before a Mickey Mantle turned up, you'd get eight Joe Blows. Collecting was a game of endurance, anxiety and pathos. Those were golden times.

As I pondered this sorry development in the field of baseball card collecting, I wondered if there were any lessons for metalsmithing, and, naturally, I found that there are.

The collection a kid assembles himself is a study in process. The shoebox full of cards carefully stashed under the bed is evidence of lawns mowed, cars washed, bottles collected. The idea of "having a collection" probably never occurred to us. We simply collected. The 200-card package was thought up by an adult. The tragedy here is that the end point has been pre-decided, and decided by someone else.

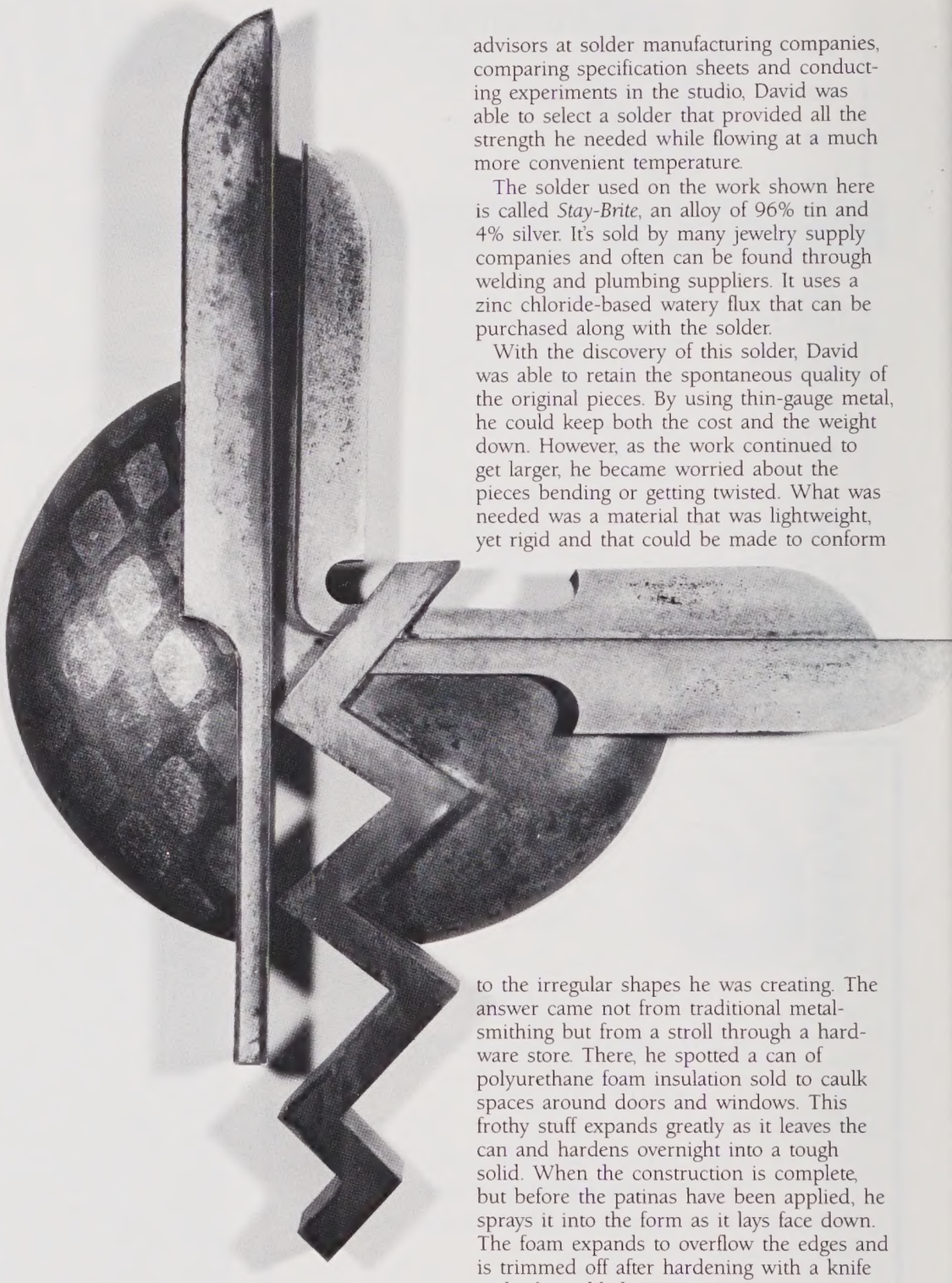
I wonder if we are not often guilty of bringing this kind of pre-decision to our work. In learning to do things "the right way" do we close doors to doing things "our way." In schools, workshops and apprenticeships, we collect bits of information. And that's great. But when we allow others to assemble and define the uses of the information, well, it just can't be as much fun.

David Pimentel of Arizona State University was recently describing the direction his work has taken over the past couple years. His longstanding interest in large, raised containers led him to volumetric forms that had outgrown the convention of "vessel." This new series of work—assembled units of heavily patinated copper—was designed to be hung on the wall. Having been well received, they triggered commissions for even larger pieces. As the work grew in size, traditional silver-soldering became difficult. Preparing well-fit seams, achieving high temperatures and dealing with warping were slowing down the process. This made the work less profitable, and perhaps more importantly, less fun. At this point, several things could have happened. David could have limited the size of his work or devised jigs and systems to deal with the difficulties. He could have switched to a different medium. Or he could have tried to find a way to join the pieces without using silver solder.

This last was the direction David took, experimenting with other kinds of solders that flow at a low temperature. He reasoned that a structure that hangs on the wall will not be subjected to the same kinds of strains as a piece of jewelry. By talking with technical advisors at solder manufacturing companies, comparing specification sheets and conducting experiments in the studio, David was able to select a solder that provided all the strength he needed while flowing at a much more convenient temperature.

The solder used on the work shown here is called *Stay-Brite*, an alloy of 96% tin and 4% silver. It's sold by many jewelry supply companies and often can be found through welding and plumbing suppliers. It uses a zinc chloride-based watery flux that can be purchased along with the solder.

With the discovery of this solder, David was able to retain the spontaneous quality of the original pieces. By using thin-gauge metal, he could keep both the cost and the weight down. However, as the work continued to get larger, he became worried about the pieces bending or getting twisted. What was needed was a material that was lightweight, yet rigid and that could be made to conform to the irregular shapes he was creating. The answer came not from traditional metalsmithing but from a stroll through a hardware store. There, he spotted a can of polyurethane foam insulation sold to caulk spaces around doors and windows. This frothy stuff expands greatly as it leaves the can and hardens overnight into a tough solid. When the construction is complete, but before the patinas have been applied, he sprays it into the form as it lays face down. The foam expands to overflow the edges and is trimmed off after hardening with a knife or hacksaw blade.



David Pimentel, *Southwest Wall Series #16*, copper with patina, 43 x 33 x 4½". Photo: Craig Smith

Both the solder and the foam struck me as great solutions. And, as I think about the baseball cards, I'm reminded again about the importance of keeping an open mind as we consider our work. Certainly, no one would consciously copy the esthetics of a friend. But I wonder if we aren't too quick to copy the technical solutions of our teachers and peers. We must remember that here is an opportunity to "build our own collection."

Tim McCreight is head of the metals department at Portland School of Art, Portland, ME and a contributing editor to Metalsmith.

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BILL HELWIG
WHAT I SAY TODAY IS A LIE TOMORROW

by Beverly J. Semmens

When enamelist Bill Helwig celebrated the half-century mark in July of 1988, his wife, Lenore Davis, asked the celebrants to festoon the trees with colorful paper strips with famous Helwig quotes. Most were culled from his workshops and provide a familiar litany for those who have experienced his teaching style over the past 20 years. The quote above leaped to the fore as I reviewed my taped interviews with him, for, although I've know Bill Helwig for close to 30 years, he has remained an enigma. The hours of conversation for this article helped illuminate, but certainly did not eliminate, all of the mysteries.

"What I say today is a lie tomorrow" means that he is a consummate researcher and experimenter who continually reinvents and reintroduces technical knowledge to spur the growth of enameling as a viable, exciting art medium. The ultimate enameling book, which we hope he completes and leaves as a legacy, may never reach the printer. Each day he discovers anew the wonders of glass fused to metal, and each night he rewrites the previous chapter. It has become a Penelope-like ritual.

Just where did the impetus for this enamelist's insatiable curiosity begin? The roots are Kansan and reveal much about the man. Raised by his grandparents, he asserts that his questions were either patiently answered or that solutions were suggested for the problems he posed. At six, for example, Helwig recalled being upset that he didn't have a bowl of his own, required for his play. His grandfather found some limestone pieces, and showed him how to rotate them over round stones to grind out two shallow bowls, warning the boy that it would "take some time." This self-dependency mode was further encouraged during the family' s thrice-weekly treks to the bowling alley, where he was given lots of paper and crayons to amuse himself. Early on, he could draw, or reproduce, virtually anything he saw. He claims, with a hint of pride, and no apology, that he's doing nothing different now than he did as a child in Kansas, exploring sandstone, mineral deposits, the residue of shell forms and a horizon uninterrupted by fences.

School itself was a less positive experience, including the threat of failure in the second grade, just because he broke his crayons while trying to fit them into a more pleasing box. Helwig learned easily and quickly by observation and example, despite his slight problems with reading, or with grasping words as total units. Very little formal art training was available to him, but during the summer following high school he took drawing and watercolor classes in a neighboring town while preparing to enter Fort Hays, Kansas State College as a Pre-Med student.

Helwig realized by the time he reached the junior year in college that finances and family atittudes would deter him from completing a medical degree, so he transferred to art. Two influential teachers John Thornes (jewelry and design) and Joel Moss (ceramics and watercolor) urged him to be excited about learning. Never idle, he created cartoons for campus publications, worked in both the bookstore and reference library and sold a lot of silver jewelry—examples of which he wishes he still had, due to their unique, avant-garde qualities. He remained at Fort Hays to complete both bachelor and master degrees in watercolor, with thesis work that was abstract, vigorous and freely handled.

After graduation, in 1961, he taught junior high school art for one semester in Leavenworth, Kansas, then headed south for a Mexican holiday. But a draft notice intervened, and Helwig enlisted in the Army. Due to a fluke, he was sent to Wurzburg, Germany, for a 30-month assignment, winding up an Administrative Specialist at the post's hospital (when they learned he could type) and enjoying some freedoms that few other enlisted men could manage. Not content to merely "serve his time," Helwig ran a radio station, designed Christmas cards and medallions, painted, worked with Special Services and arranged children's programs.

Upon discharge, he returned home to become the assistant director of the Creative Craft Center at the State University of New York at Buffalo, where he remained for nine years. Jean Delius, who had seen Helwig's watercolors, suggested that he might like enameling, and the first seed was sown. Within three years, he taught himself the basics, beginning with color-field studies, which employed fire scale and bands of color. He read voraciously and turned his attention to grisaille, since there was little or no competition in that area. Margarete Seeler provided encouragement and information, but the remainder he acquired through autodidactic tenacity.

Marriage to fiber artist Lenore Davis in 1968 enhanced both his interaction with the art community and his own creative energies. Early Helwig grisailles suggest interesting parallels to Davis's use of the human figure as landscape. Both grew up in the flatlands (Kansas and Montana), with similar spatial landscapes of interminable blue skies and unbroken horizons. As an independent, solitary child, Helwig seems to have later suffused his enamels with mythical figures from his reading, or with surrogate friends from his imagination as a way of counteracting that endless Kansan plain. Davis, the daughter of a forestry professor, used her ebullient figures to form the landscape and to protect its riches, ever mindful of the freedom such spaces provide. She seems to find the spaces liberating; he tends to find them restricting.

By 1973, Helwig was teaching part-time at Buffalo State, but there's no doubt it was a full-time effort. As he says, "I know I teach very well; *I* had very good teachers." Disciplined and demanding of himself, he expects the same from stu-

Bed Sheet and Pillow Series #2: Inner Edges," 8 x 10", camaieu on steel, 1984

dents. He might have remained in the academic realm, but was lured by Woodrow Carpenter to the Ceramic Coating Company in Newport, Kentucky in 1977, to head the Vitrearc division. These two men shared knowledge about, and enthusiasm for, enamels, resulting in an eight-year commitment by Helwig to the development of lead-free enamels for artists. This was the period of his greatest technical growth: testing and changing formulas, researching historical documents and tying everything together with current industrial methods. The laboratory at Ceramic Coating Company became his studio. It wasn't uncommon for him to fire 144 one-inch text squares five times in one day, in addition to his personal experiments (he was free to create his own imagery). Helwig mastered the techniques as few others could, developing an inner clock for firing times and sifting enamels with astounding accuracy and consistency. He learned the language of industry, to communicate with the production team, and edited the publication *Glass on Metal*. Unfortunately, the intensity and success of these efforts also precluded participation in juried shows or the wider dissemination of his enamel work. Helwig admits that he became locked into discovering—a virtual victim of information. His industry experience may have heightened the conflict between scientist and artist, with the prolific edging out the profound. Although he prepared pieces at home to fire at the factory, this period of intense production necessarily resulted in some schematic work. The enamels completed during this stage seem, despite their technical virtuosity, to be more contrived conceptually, no doubt due to the stress of relentless research.

Thus, in 1985, he decided to become a full-time studio artist. He refers to himself as an alchemist who retires to his monastery, gets out his enamels and plays. His third-floor studio is relatively free of visual stimuli or music. Helwig works on six to eight enamels simultaneously, some of which require only a few hours and a

minimal number of firings, others remaining in the studio a year until they're considered finished. Unlike many enamelists, he seldom draws or plans pieces in advance, preferring to approach the metal like a painter does the raw canvas. Since even *his* kiln can provide surprises when colors layer and interact, some firings lead to extended contemplation and reworking. Nor do transparent enamels allow the luxury of completely obscuring an area to begin anew, as pigments can. As a watercolorist, he is accustomed to spontaneous, direct application methods, but the kiln adds another factor to the work's success.

Helwig's impact on enameling has been profound. He has either "reinvented" or brought back numerous processes and techniques through tireless research and experimentation. First on his list of contributions is the grisaille technique, which he presented in larger formats and with contemporary imagery. Coupled with his growing expertise in grisaille enamel, he reintroduced the art of fuming, as practiced in the Tiffany and Lalique studios, to create lustrous, iridescent surfaces with myriad color shifts. He consulted with glass artists and chemists in developing his own method. The process also made him ill, so it was removed from his repertoire. In defiance of the conventional stamped metal forms available to enamelists, he innovatively altered the outside edges, pierced interiors, hammered plates full of texture, upturned edges or manipulated the metal while still hot from the kiln. The latter process was new in America but had been practiced in Europe for years. Like so many of his discoveries, what began as an accidnet emerged as yet another method to push enameling beyond the limitations often ascribed to the medium.

When asked why he ignores or dislikes cloisonné enamel, he responded that he prefers to leave it to others who do it well, and that he "doesn't like fences." The shoe series, which he created as a teaching aid several years ago (*Double-Breasted Boot*) resulted in cryptic social comments

Opposite: *Comment*, grisaille, 9 x 12½ x ½", 1970; *The Librarian*, grisaille, pure gold, 13⅛" max. d., 1976

about shoes and their wearers and allowed his sardonic wit to emerge in the titles. He saw the work as being nonserious, therefore the humor and sarcasm were given free reign, and the results often delight. I think that his avoidance of cloisonné is two-fold. When he first began to study enamels, he realized that the field was crowded with cloisonné artists, and he wanted to carve a totally unique niche for himself that could lead to greater recognition. In addition, the wires tend to impede his painterly approach to the medium, drawing too much attention away from the rich colors, depth and surfaces he desires.

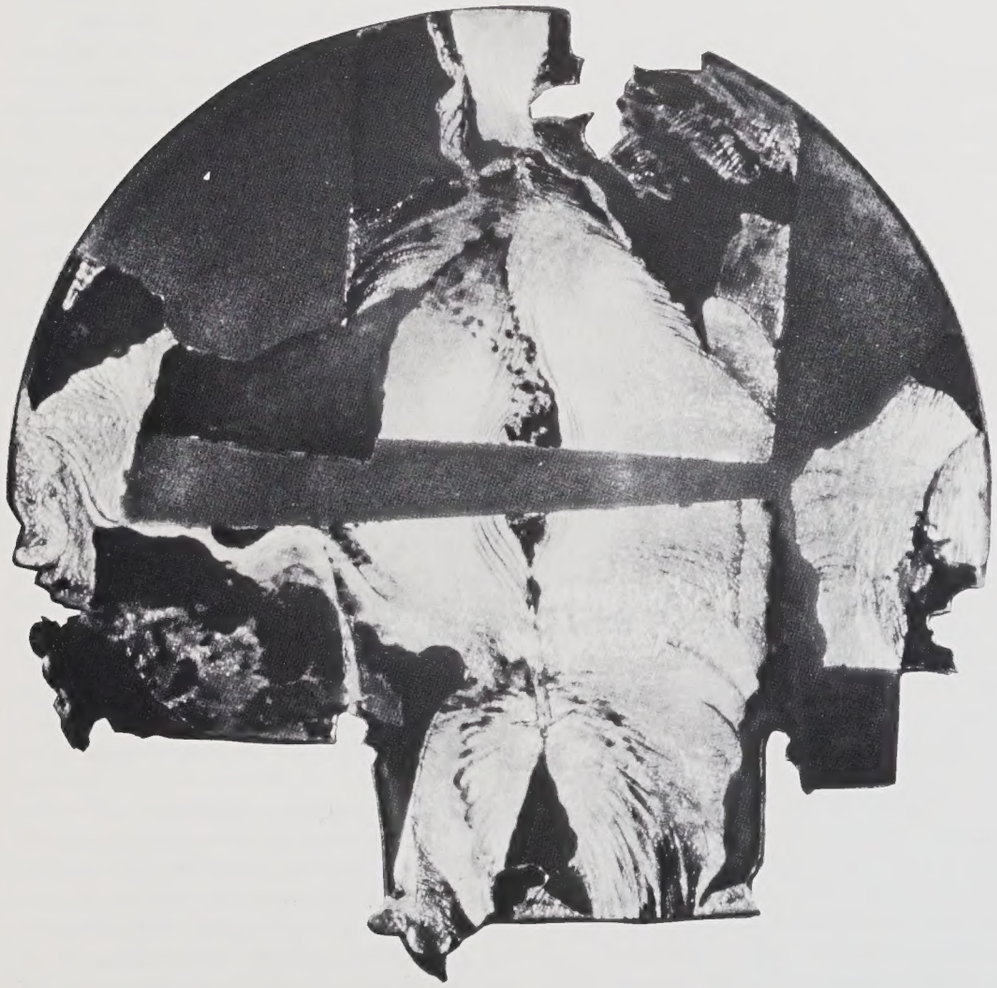
Preferring direct, spontaneous methods of enamel application, and a pastiche of processes, he relied upon the shallow bowl format for years. He feels that the manageable size and shape allow the viewer a personal interaction that comes with turning the pieces in the hand. I fear that this assertion forestalls consideration of the real problem, that of presentation. It is difficult to imagine these expensive enamels piled with food, despite Helwig's claim that he prefers that functional aspect. Rather, I see the pieces deserving special presentation, either on the wall or in boxes, to isolate them in the environment. Helwig is aware of the presentation problems, particularly with the shallow-bowl forms, but no affordable, acceptable solution has been found.

He even began to make his own glass, resulting in some unique ruby and pink colors. Also, rather than using the lusters commercially available to the enamelist, he tried Winsor-Newton's pure gold on the surface, firing it in place with the addition of oil binders. *Red Sea, She Said* uses underglaze ceramics pencils in a new way as color tonalities and line work atop enamels. These experiments occurred nearly 15 years ago and are now taken for granted by the enamel community.

Discontent with using minute amounts of silver or gold foil to accent an enamel, Helwig covered the entire surface, then reticulated details or used oxides to create his imagery. A Helwig signature style is the hiding of bodies within bodies or faces within heads, like the games included in the Sunday comics that he remembers from his childhood. Unafraid to alter the surface, he will etch it chemically, add oxides and fire anew. If a sculpted surface is the goal, enamel is applied like an impasto painting.

There are no sacred cows in Helwig's enamel lexicon. He's an enthusiastic, prolific risk-taker in the enamel studio, and his expertise is unmatched. Fortunately,

Top left: *Alpha Omega*, underglaze, silver and gold foil with pure gold details, 8½″ d., 1983; **left:** *The Servant Caught a Thousand Conjectures*, basse tailee, underglaze, repousse, 12⅓″ d., 1982; **opposite, top:** *Heaven and Earth*, underglaze, silver and gold foil, 9″ d., 1985; **right:** *Unnamed Angel*, 8½″ max. d., 1981



his selflessness provides for the promulgation of that expertise through his workshops and writings. He encourages students to learn the logic of the process, rather than the process itself. Helwig generously shares his hard-earned technical knowledge to assure progress in the medium. Unencumbered by an academic's strictures, he reinvents the art form daily, both technically and esthetically.

When you become aware of the thousands of enamels he has created, it is easy to forget that Helwig has been involved with the medium only since the 1960s, and that a considerable portion of that time was spent teaching himself or working closely with manufactory. Thus, his image making may still be in its infancy. He concurs that his images will change and become more personal the longer he is away from industry. I sense that the close, introspective scrutiny that he lavishes on these pieces during their production can lead to a surfeit of both technique and imagery, resulting in a less cohesive whole. A close-up, for example of *Alpha-Omega* reveals the strength and intrigue of one surface and could stand as a statement unto itself. The figurative, narrative works, although readily identified as Helwig's, are often inscrutable. In some works, the figures are stiff, with bizarre exaggerations, and a whiteness that makes them float eerily above rich fields of color. I respond most favorably to the works in which figures are shrouded or suggestive, for when Helwig gives me less, I'm usually rewarded with more. They allow the viewer to move between figure and ground and encourage personal interpretation.

Moving away from the figurative, he is currently engaged in new work on larger steel plates, featuring bed sheets and pillows in various stages of disarray, as in *Bed Sheets and Pillows #2, Inner Edges*. The series is as free, fluid and provocative as the watercolors from his graduate school days. One cannot help but respond to their spontaneity, peacefulness and masterful handling of the diaphanous materials. During the course of the interviews for this article, Helwig admitted to being an elitist, and I would concur that the majority of his previous enamels convey that attitude. The *Bed Sheet* series, however, provides yet another interpretation for his quote, "What I say today is a lie tomorrow," for these works are not elite. They imbue the familiar trappings of everyday life with an aura of mystery yet avoid being overworked or unapproachable. These pieces suggest to me a Bill Helwig who is more mellow and introspective yet communicative of personal feelings. Since his technical base is so secure, this seems an ideal time to allow his conceptual base to flourish. If this series is an indication, I will follow his journey with enthusiasm.

Beverly J. Semmens is a fiber artist and associate professor of fine arts at the University of Cincinnati.

On Abandoning Ignorance

by Bruce Metcalf

This essay originated as a presentation at the Society of North American Goldsmiths' conference in Flagstaff, Arizona in 1986. It has been revised and edited for publication in Metalsmith. *Metcalf's theme concerning the value of ideas as part of the metalsmith/jeweler's repertoire, expressed in his previous essays "Crafts: Second-Class Citizens?" (*Metalsmith, *Fall 80) and "Techniques for the Head" (*Metalsmith, *Winter 83), is further explored here.*

At a party some time ago, I was talking to a young metalsmith who is presently making a very successful series of lamps. I like him and his work. He is intelligent and articulate, so I was surprised when he made a statement that summarized an entire constellation of questionnable values and attitudes. I was speaking, as I often do, about the necessity of reading and writing and theorizing, and his response was neatly encapsulated in one short sentence. He said, "I just want to work."

Because I'm a craftsman too, I understood him perfectly. His greatest pleasure is working in his studio, concentrating on his craft, making decisions about technique and materials and placement of elements. Like most craftspeople who work year-in and year-out, he loves his labor. After all, the sheer manipulation of material is frequently more gratifying than the enigmas and puzzles posed by criticism and art theory. This man made a singular decision to be a craftsman, and not a scholar. Had he been fascinated with speculation about the nature of visual art, perhaps he would have become an art historian, but as it is, the activity of designing and constructing is far more satisfying to him. Time spent considering more philosophical problems is a distraction, eating into his studio time. Thus, he implied that anything more cerebral than executing a successful design is of no value to him.

Obviously, he's entitled to his opinion, and a diversity of convictions is necessary to a vital community. But I believe there's a problem in the view he expressed, and it's one that pervades the entire field of jewelry and metalsmithing. Much as I admire this artist's work, he places altogether too much faith on his powers of imagination, and too little on his intelligence. He proposes a value system that glorifies pleasure in labor, but not in thinking. He maintains that good design and good craftsmanship is enough. He proposes that his decisions are guided by seat-of-the-pants intuition, not questioning and analysis. He implies that he has no struggle with serious issues, no critical examination of his sources, no rigorous description of what he really intends to accomplish with his career. He "just wants to work," and he is satisfied with going no further.

The point is this: self-education is not a luxury, it is a necessity. Abandoning ignorance is difficult and it necessitates time away from the bench. It requires a reordering of priorities.

This value system isn't unusual. In fact, I suspect it's typical of contemporary jewelers and metalsmiths. There are only a handful of individuals in this field who can develop a provocative idea, speak knowledgeably about current issues in painting and sculpture or systematically analyze their own work. Even our workshops and conferences are usually devoted to learning technique, to viewing work and to catching up on gossip—not to creating forums for the discussion of new ideas. And only rarely do metalsmiths sit down informally to talk about esthetic questions. Those who call themselves jewelers are often appallingly ignorant of the history of the world's jewelry, or even of European jewelry. (How many people know in which century faceted gemstones started to be used, for instance?) Those who call themselves designers suffer equal ignorance of the history of design. We are well informed as to the how of what we do, but terribly deficient as to the what and why.

I must emphasize that I am not dismissing intuition. Not so long ago, I argued that only intuition could make the crucial difference, that art without the magical presence of the artist's deepest feelings is always missing an essential ingredient. I claimed that discourse and debate in art is merely an interesting sideshow for a select group of initiates, but all that talk and theorizing is irrelevant to real excellence in art. I believed that "soul"—in the sense that we speak of soul music—was the single most important element in art. Thus, if an artist could pour his soul into his work, no further examination would be necessary. Like my friend, an artist could "just want to work" and the results could still be extraordinary. To this day, I believe that some type of pure intuition and inspiration is important, because an artist becomes a machine without it. However, I no longer believe that intuition, by itself, is enough. For art (or design, or jewelry) to reach the highest level, intelligence must modulate intuition.

Intelligence. Not ignorance.

In all the visual arts, the best work demonstrates intelligence, visibly expressed. Masters in every field use their technical facility to communicate an idea or a perception in a relatively conscious manner. The great artists and designers were never inarticulate dullards; usually they were eloquent and full of fascinating notions. The prototypical goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini had a sharp intelligence along with his predisposition towards exaggeration. The people who led the post-war revival of American jewelry and metalsmithing are all bright—Margret Craver, Kenneth Bates, Alma Eikerman, Phil Fike—and their innovations are based on wide learning as well as hard work and a sure instinct. I have never heard of a great artist who claimed that ignorance was crucial to his or her contribution.

Knowledge Modulates Intuition

The typical jeweler knows something of the history of art, and she's familiar with the central propositions of Western philosophy. She might make claims about the primacy of intuition, but she has already learned too much not to be in-

fluenced by her education. She operates in a state of awareness that alters and distorts pure, naive impulses. A naive posture can be assumed, and the ideology of fine art can be rejected. But knowledge cannot be jettisoned, any more than reading can be unlearned. In a manner of speaking, most of us lost our intellectual virginity long ago.

As a teacher, I watch my students go through a progression from ignorance to self-awareness to intelligent observation. Beginning students are raw and naive but excitable and receptive to almost any new information. The best enthusiastically try on all manner of styles and concepts in an effort to find what fits. For the most part, however, their thoughts are predictable and unoriginal, and all but a few are controlled by their emotions and received ideologies.

In the course of education, students are pressured to internalize all kinds of opinions and value systems, often without their direct knowledge. A group of assertions, theories and aims can constitute a political ideology as well as an artistic one, and teachers (along with parents, peers and the media) compete to indoctrinate students with their belief systems. But, at least in the academy, the contention between ideologies makes the nature of the game clearer, and students eventually realize that they can't possibly believe everything they hear. They start to question what they are asked to receive, they examine what they once might have accepted uncritically.

Outside of the schools, ideologies are every bit as potent but more subtly camouflaged. Each practitioner believes his or her approach to be right and proper, and nobody can deny their liberty to say so. But these beliefs are frequently nothing more than conventional wisdom, assumed unsuspectingly from the surrounding culture. For instance, many jewelers maintain that jewelry must be small in order to be wearable, and they speak for the vast majority of their customers when they voice this opinion. Yet alternatives exist. Men and women of the Dinka tribe in the Sudan or the Wodaabe tribe in Niger wear corsets, bodices, armlets and bracelets that are enormous by American standards, but jewelry nonetheless. A quick perusal of Angela Fisher's fabulous *Africa Adorned*

Thoughtless work is mindless work.

will prove that much of the world does not subscribe to middle-class American definitions of the limits of jewelry. Such definitions are culturally determined, and they operate only within a certain context. The assertion that jewelry must be small is nothing more (or less) than a received ideology, one that is unfortunately sometimes raised to the status of truth.

If ideologies are not called to attention, analyzed and questioned, a student risks becoming the puppet of somebody else's program, a mere operative for an anonymous authority. The band "Oingo-Boingo" puts it this way: "We make ourselves like clay from someone else's dream." Just as the women's liberation movement asked women to look at all the self-defeating ideas they were taught to believe, so students must question the rules of the game they have been taught. Is the place of the woman really in the home? Is perfect craftsmanship truly appropriate in every situation?

It's amazing how many restrictions are voluntarily self-imposed, taken on simply because an authority said it was so. Some of my students are fearful of freely expressing themselves, because they think such impractical activities won't help them get a job later. I tell them that the objective of a college education is not strictly vocational but also a process of self-discovery and gaining flexibility. The notion of making only practical things because the economic payoff is better is a myth, I tell them, and they are better off discarding such restrictions. I frequently think I'm not talking to the students at those times but to the voices of their parents implanted in their brains.

Perhaps one of the difficulties of metalsmithing is that the skills take so long to learn, and are so demanding, that we avoid examining our thoughts. Through the 50s and 60s, metalsmiths struggled to gain control over the tremendous range of techniques that comprise the craft of the jeweler and smith, as if the collective energy of the field was concentrated on a single point. The skill of conceptualizing was neglected so that the craft could be mastered. But, like my students, craftsmen risked becoming slaves to received ideologies. If artists and designers and jewelers refuse to think for themselves, they lose control over half their work. Thinking demands facility, too. Now that the field insists on a certain level of technical sophistication (simple twisted and forged wire just won't cut the mustard anymore), competence in thinking can be demanded, too. After all, the responsibility of the designer and artist extends to the idea implicit in a work, just as much as the planning and execution.

I urge my students who arrive at a sound understanding of their values and priorities to start looking outside themselves, at works and readings. They sift through information to find bits and pieces that support and enlarge upon what they already believe. A student interested in contemporary design might read Charles Jencks on Post-Modernism, or Barbara Radice on the Memphis group. Another student drawn to Japanese craft might research Cha-no-yu, the tea ceremony, and its traditional implements. They are not required to believe everything they read; in fact, I recommend a healthy scepticism. In spite of their complaints that research takes time away from their work in the studio, this self-directed education is essential to the students' growth. Eventually, most students realize that new information expands their horizons, suggests new alternatives and forces them to make intellectual connections they would otherwise miss. As a result, their work becomes richer and deeper, and often more satisfying to the student.

Remedy the I'm-Too-Busy Syndrome

The point is this: self-education is not a luxury, it is a necessity. Abandoning ignorance is difficult and it necessitates time away from the bench. It requires a reordering of priorities.

People who have heard me make this point in public complain that I ask too much, that most jewelers are too busy to tackle such a difficult project. It's OK for professors like myself to read and write

because we have so much free time, they say. (Another myth—that teachers are less busy than "real" jewelers!) Of course, a person who makes a livelihood from his craft must pay his bills, meet deadlines, create new designs and produce his wares. But all instruction comes in small increments and a great deal can be learned in only 20 minutes a day.

One of the best devices for self-education is talking. Ideas flourish in an atmosphere of discussion and debate, and thinking evolves most easily in a communal, participatory process. This is the reason why cities become art centers: a community of artists creates a fertile ground for the growth and exchange of ideas, which in turn stimulates the growth of art itself. Artists isolated from an intellectual marketplace are handicapped because their thinking is not challenged and sharpened by discussion. It's curious, but one must exercise the mouth to develop the brain.

Unluckily, the metals community is not concentrated in a single city, and there's no Cedar Street Tavern we can all retire to each evening for a session of heated debate. To air our ideas, jewelers and metalsmiths must rely on conferences, workshops and informal visits. Luckily, the crafts disciplines have a readymade context for the commerce of ideas because of the tradition of workshops created to share technical knowledge. Outside of the art schools and universities, which contain only a minority of the practitioners in the field, these gatherings are the only forum for the verbal exchange of new concepts. The annual Society of North American Goldsmith's conference and the "Conversations" weekends developed at State University of New York, New Paltz are valuable for precisely this reason.

For those who must stay at home, there's always reading. A reader of this magazine is making an effort to educate herself, but I don't believe the project should stop when *Metalsmith* is put down. The magazines that focus on other crafts fields offer a wealth of ideas. I find the rich surfaces of ceramics and the seductiveness of glass to be intriguing, and I'm curious to see how artists in these disciplines exploit these properties. Art magazines offer both thoughtful insights and verbose nonsense, but it's useful to sample both. Actually, intelligent commentary on any subject can stimulate the mind, particularly for those with an inclination towards analogies. Fiction, poetry, even *Scientific American*, can serve as a point of origin for a productive train of thought.

A single incisive idea can alter the way hundreds of artists (or designers or jewelers) look at themselves.

The Transforming Power of an Idea

Having collected one's thoughts, having questioned one's assumptions, having read and thought, does it make any difference? Some will maintain that it is better to do, than to think. They will say that time in the studio is far superior to time in a library. But all my experience, as artist and teacher, indicates that exercising the hands without stretching the mind leads to imbalance: Thoughtless work is mindless work.

One of the characteristics of the crafts that perplexes and fascinates me is the range of things we don't know. Crafts have a history in every culture, the sum total of which can be traced to the times before recorded history began. What is the extent of this material, and what implications does it have for us today? Why, with such an extensive background—one that far exceeds the history of painting and sculpture—are the crafts still the 90-pound weakling of the arts scene? Why is loyalty to material so strong among craftsmen? Why are jewelers so compelled to work on a tiny scale, and what are the implications of small objects? What is the meaning of fine craftsmanship? Is the craftsman really an anachronism, or do we have something of vital importance to offer to contemporary society?

The answer to these questions might provide an enlightening insight to the craft. On occasion, such an answer becomes an idea with the power to transform everything it touches.

An example of how an idea has had a profound impact on a discipline can be found in the invention of the "vessel-oriented clay object" by Garth Clark and Betty Woodman. In the mid-70s, a number of ceramists were making pots and potlike clay objects, but no binding theory gave their activities a common focus. Michael Frimkess made pots that referred to classical Greek and Roman vessel forms; Ron Nagle made small decorated cups without bottoms; Wayne Higby was making open forms that could be regarded as landscapes. Many other clay artists made objects that similarly recalled the simple pot but also served as a vehicle for agendas not traditionally associated with functional pottery. While all these artists shared a common background and a common enthusiasm for clay, there was no conceptual marker that pointed either to the differences or the similarities of their work. Ceramic artists sensed their ideas were related, but nobody could give the relationship a name. Without a name, the connections could not be discussed; without discussion, the issue remained mysterious.

The story goes that Clark and Woodman were talking with a group of students in Colorado, trying to put their collective finger on the relationship that had so far eluded them. In looking at functional pots, hollow forms that used the pot as a point of departure for sculpture, and forms that alluded to pots without actually being a pot, the group produced a name and a concept: the vessel-oriented clay object. The phrase contained a fascinating accuracy and inclusiveness that attracted wide attention: it was shortly abbreviated to "VOCO" so that conversations could proceed without the long phrase being repeated interminably. The concept neatly raised an umbrella over a vast array of ceramic art, calling attention to the overriding similarity while also allowing for diversity.

It could be said without exaggeration that the "VOCO" prompted a whole generation of artists and students to look at the clay pot differently. Suddenly, the humble pot was clearly seen to be a starting point for a variety of explorations. The artist could concentrate on historical reference,

on sheer development of form or on using the container form as a metaphor, but the relationship was finally made clear. By 1980, it was fashionable for neophyte clay artists to declare themselves to be "vessel-makers," for the name had the sound of validation. The vessel-oriented clay object had become ubiquitous. Despite the eventual trendiness of the concept, it brought a cohesiveness and direction to ceramics that had been lacking since the 50s.

A single incisive idea can alter the way hundreds of artists (or designers or jewelers) look at themselves. When ideas are marshalled into a cohesive whole, or when they become more speculative than a simple observation, a theory emerges. A great theory can change the way we look at the world.

The intimate relation between theory and practice can be illustrated by a bit of crafts history. The Arts and Crafts Movement in 1880s England was the first to examine craft apart from the simple production of wares for the working classes and decorative items for the rich. John Ruskin and William Morris both perceived craft to have more importance than technique and salesmanship, and their ideas laid the groundwork for a popular enthusiasm for craft that continues to this day. Every present-day craft practitioner owes a profound debt to Ruskin and Morris, not so much for the objects they made (Ruskin did not work in any traditional craft media, although Morris mastered several), but for the ideas they advocated. Our accomplishments rest on theories developed a century ago, and many of our contemporary debates were first delineated then.

William Morris in particular did not confine his thinking to craft alone. He was interested in the relationship between labor—the physical labor of the craftsman—and social structure. Being a socialist, he opposed capitalist factory production, especially in how mass production forced workers to perform meaningless, repetitive tasks. Morris speculated that the craftsman in the antiquated guild system had an advantage over a factory worker, because the guildsman could invest pride and care in his work. Ideally, the traditional craftsman controlled his own production too: he decided what to make and he kept the profits from the sale of his wares. To Morris, the older system was superior to industrial-age manufacturing. Not only was the laborer happier and more dignified in his work, but he was also the primary beneficiary of his production.

Our accomplishments rest on theories developed a century ago, and many of our contemporary debates were first delineated then.

In this manner William Morris drew a number of connections between the making of crafts and much larger social issues. Weaving a tapestry or throwing a clay pot suddenly became more significant than just making a beautiful thing: it was also a gesture that criticized the capitalist economy and proposed a more humane alternative at the same time. Craft became a form of protest and Utopian injunction.

Previously, craft was often regarded as dumb manual labor, the activity of peasants and commoners. Because of the idealistic overtones that Morris associated with craft, and because Morris and his followers promoted his ideas with religious zeal, a generation of talented young visionaries joined the movement. Just as antiwar activism attracted a huge number of concerned and intelligent young people in the 60s, so the crafts appealed to thoughtful people who envisioned a better world in Morris's day. The appeal was not so much the labor of craft but the meaning invested in it. Morris's theories gave the body of craft an idealistic luster that proved irresistably attractive. The movement, and its fervent message of improving the world, was exported to the United States, where it became the American Arts and Crafts Movement.

Although the socialist analysis that Morris prescribed has since fallen out of favor, his theories in their own day had a powerful motivating force that changed crafts in the Western world forever. Morris looked at far more than the production of hand-made objects, he considered the whole society. The scope of his vision encompassed a great web of causes and effects, and some of the questions he raised are still being debated. We still question the role of the machine in the crafts, for instance, because we are not sure if mass production is an efficient way to generate income or just a compromise to the values of handwork. This same issue was one that Morris addressed. It is a credit to his imaginative reach that the issues he raised continue to be relevant.

Not everybody can be as farsighted as William Morris, nor can most of us hope to work such profound changes on even a tiny corner of society. But we can seek to comprehend ourselves and the culture in which we operate. One of the strengths of any craft is that its producers are not alienated from the larger culture: we make the pots and clothes and jewelry that hundreds of thousands of people use. While many aspects of this relationship are only dimly grasped, what craftspeople understand of themselves, their work and society has significance and resonance. Naming these connections and comprehending their logic is vitally important. After all, what we do affects people.

This being so, we might as well accept our condition and proceed to become informed about the world. As artists or jewelers or whatever one chooses for a label, it is no longer forgivable to live in ignorance. The innocent period of American metalsmithing is over. Now that we have learned the technologies, we must prepare to exercise our skills intelligently. We must go about educating ourselves. Just as the past three decades have been devoted to learning how to use tools, the suceeding 30 years can be devoted to understanding *why* we use tools. Those who "just want to work" are tackling only half the enterprise: the complete metalsmith will also want to understand.

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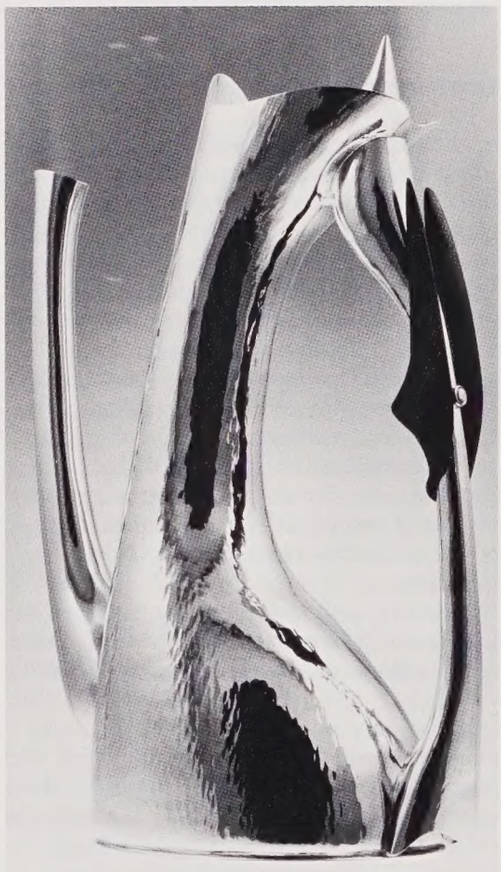
LOIS ETHERINGTON BETTERIDGE STRETCHING MATERIAL LIMITS

by Carole Hanks

The core of life's work in fine artisanry is the unfolding of a personal style within the cultural milieu of one's time. Exploration, experimentation and sensitivity to material characterize such development. Over the past 30 years Lois Betteridge has developed a particular and distinctive style based on the discipline of working gold and silver. It is a materials-based approach with its corollary of technique. Through physical interaction with materials, she has honed a modern esthetic that has been derived out of the cold-forming of metals. Just recently, however, at a full maturity of her craftsmanship, she has begun to move away from this earlier sensibility, developing formal qualities no longer so closely allied to the handworking techniques that shaped her original characterization, as well as a more liberal approach to style, which has induced a radical design shift. The intermediary stages of her course have produced a fusion of opposites that expresses a unique vision and a salient hand. This composite style has developed out of an interface between traditional and modern approaches and unifies the polarities of her style.



Martini Pitcher, sterling silver, 7½" h., 1979. Photo: Keith Betteridge; **opposite:** *Teapot with String,* copper and brass, 25 x 20 cm, 1987

Early Work: Free-Form Metal

In the goldsmith's lexicon, the slow, laborious process of making usually determines a conservative approach to an individual's esthetics and design sensibility. One's sense of beauty develops through the characteristics of the material and the material has much to say in determining form. Such is the case with historical work and such has been the case with Lois Betteridge's work. In fact, complex raising problems were the technical challenge Betteridge set for herself in her early work. Construction techniques were not emphasized. As a result, an organic, unconstructed esthetic developed that grew naturally out of the raising technique. A flowing, linear quality was the basis of this early esthetic.

Betteridge's early works developed through disciplined study grounded in such traditional techniques. The *Honey Pot* and *Judaica Spice Shaker* are extreme examples of raising. They are *tour-de-force* objects that derive their esthetic, in strong measure, from technique. Both are based on deeply constructed convolutions, the material being alternately stretched and compressed along determined paths while, at the same time, a sheet of silver is forced out of two dimensions into three. Such handling pushes the technique of raising to an extreme level of mastery and the maleable tolerance of silver to its outer limits. The repoussé and chasing that shape the surface of the *Spice Shaker* are as extreme an example of those techniques as one might find in any historical gold- or silverwork. While the *Honey Pot* is less intense in surface handling, it holds to the same idea of stretching material limits and refining technique as a base for exploration. Alternating ridges encircle a swelling curve, flowing into a counter-curved lip that wraps back on itself to form one circular shape formed at 90 degrees to another.

Tot Cup for an Insomniac fully bridges the gap between playful effect and the seriousness of tradition and workmanship. Clearly masterful in its making, it has a whimsical quality couched in its tipsy form and springy protuberances and a late-night, other-worldly quality in its perforated texture. It is a 20-century equivalent of the kind of serious, but exuberant, precious metal objects of centuries past that were masterpieces of technique festooned with mythological figures and the abundance of nature. From the Renaissance forward, there are innumerable examples of containers and

barely functional *objets* created in the form of castles, ships, fountains and what have you, chased, repousséd, engraved and set with gems, until the very idea of the piece became subsumed in the excessiveness and joy of the actual working process. Such elaboration of form was very serious, even while employing playful imagery in whimsical juxtapositions. In the 20 century, our esthetic sensibility requires a far sparer object, but Betteridge's tie to such exuberance of the goldsmith's tradition remains. The point, here, is that technique is a partner in determining form. *Tot Cup's* asymmetrical shape is based on raising, its lumpy hide is a result of hammering and its accounterments of springs and clock are constructed into the whole. They represent the pushing and pulling of material to enjoy its effect, then working through their results to complete an idea—an idea that is partly the maker's and partly the material's response to being worked. The imagery is playful and the juxtapositions whimsical, but the fact of the piece, itself, is serious.

"Letting the material speak" was, in fact, an approach current in the 60s, when Betteridge was in an early stage of developing her ideas about interactions among materials, design and workmanship. Nature was viewed with romantic reverence and the human hand was expected to play a subsidiary role, enhancing material rather than ordering it. While throughout history emphasis has shifted first to favor the interfering hand, then the dominant material, the two have never been separable until modern times. Hands have done the thinking, as it were, in response to properties of a material and hand tools, being tactile objects, created intimacy with those materials. Esthetics and workmanship under these conditions are interdependant. Working the other way around, that is, designing for specific symbolic, iconographic or other non-material purposes, and demanding that the material conform to a firmly established idea, results in cerebral, less tactile objects. This is the controlled, designerly approach sought today. It is both mind- and machine-oriented, the mind supplying the directions and the hand being stayed. With industrial methods, the hand is distanced from the material and the interlocking of hand technique and esthetic is broken. The effect produced is entirely different. Spontaneity of workmanship is no longer an issue.

Recent Work: Constructed Geometry

Betteridge's most recent work is characterized by constructed geometric forms. It is, thus, radically different from her earlier work in both esthetic and technical emphasis. That she has chosen to step out of an old model of workmanship and embrace a dramatically opposed esthetic, particularly at the height of her career, is of interest and consequence.

Construction is an esthetic of parts and their relationships. Constructed work has a preplanned quality. It is designed, controlled and dominated by the maker's mind. Given the Modern insistence on spare, clean geometrics, the result does not acknowledge nature. Material is considered and, indeed, even handworked, but it does not speak. While the results need suffer no poor comparison to more freely formed pieces, they are entirely different.

A statuesque silver coffee pot with acrylic accents exemplifies Betteridge's constructed approach. No less technically brilliant than the earlier free-form pieces, the work is, however, about design. It is a relationship of circle to cylinder to rectangle. It is light-reflecting silver played off against dark-absorbing acrylic. It is line worked against form. The balance is formal and rational. Technique is hidden behind design and the older sensibility that bespeaks hands-on material is no longer dominant.

As part of a grouping of type, the statuesque coffee pot is the most formal of a collection that includes a series of copper coffees designed for small-scale production. These coffees represent an approach to industrial method that allows refinement and creativity of design, but bear no relationship to the maker's hand. Sharp-angled, clean-edged and visually active, they are whimsically geometric and meticulously functional.

A small tea pot named *Madhatter's Tea*

Left: *Madhatter's Tea Party*, sterling silver, brass and acrylic (with sterling doormouse inside), 22.5 x 24 cm, 1988, *Honey Pot*, sterling silver, raised, chasing and repousse, 5½", 1976. Photo: Keith Betteridge

Party, like the statuesque silver coffee pot, is a showpiece in the geometric manner. It, too, hides materiality behind design. But under the lid, inside the pot, is a doormouse, guest and critic at the original "Madhatter's Tea Party," guest and critic of this one. It is startling or delightful, according to one's inclination. The doormouse is an organic object inside a geometric object and its natural quality counters the cerebral geometry of the container. Although the maker's hand has actually shaped both inner and outer forms, the effect of an object simultaneously removed from and dependent on handwork remains. The material itself echoes the opposition—a textural and shaggy little object inside a smoothly refined one—a reminder of handwork inside an intimation of hands-off perfection. In comparison to the grouping of copper coffees, this work is still marked by Betteridge's older approach. Nature and the touch of the hand on material show through. It is intermediary between hand and machine esthetic.

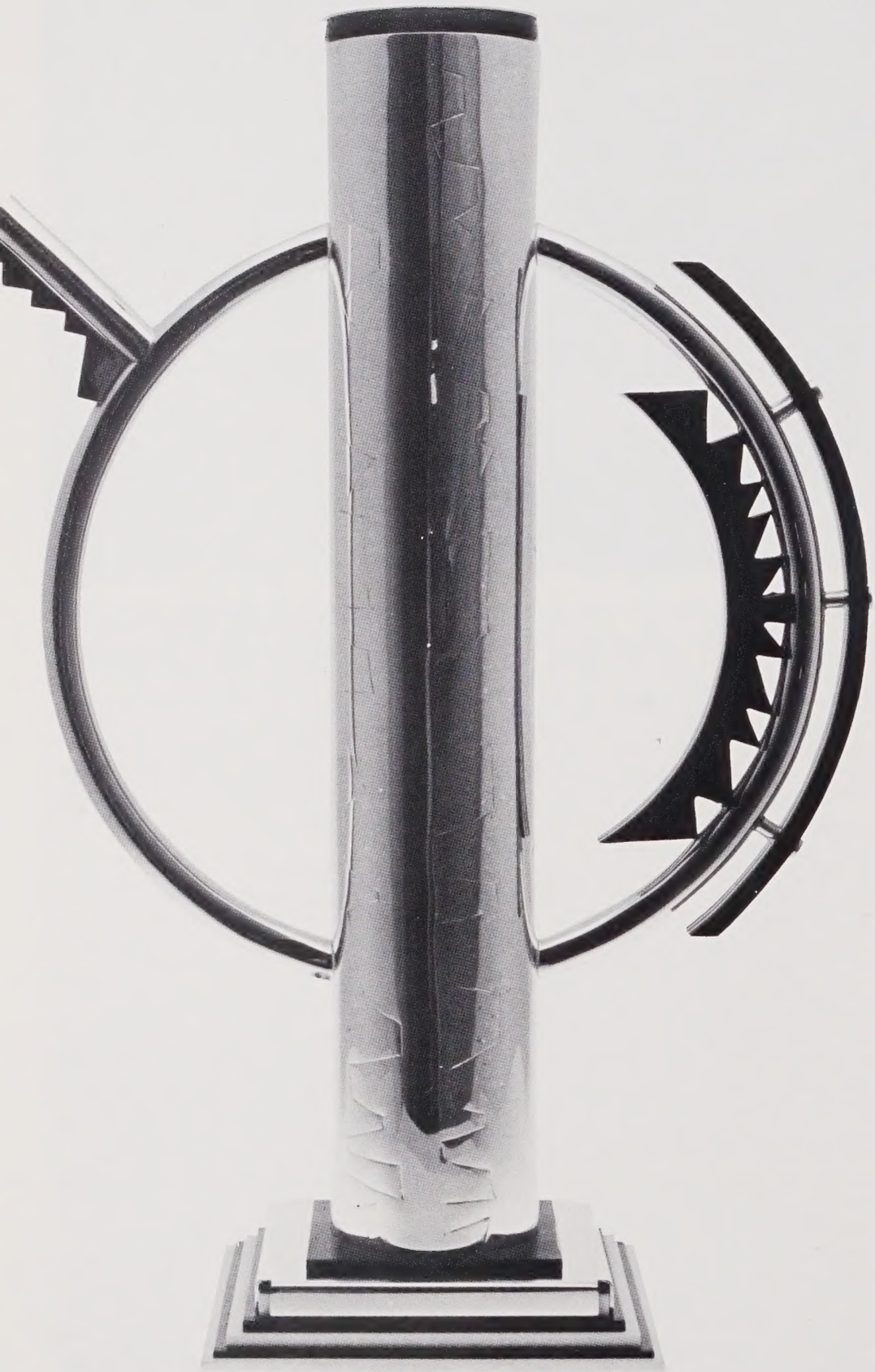
Between the two extremes of Betteridge's work are compound pieces, a literal mix of geometric and free forms. In these works, more strongly than in the Madhatter's teapot, an experimental mix of color, material and surface treatment are brought into play. A combination of diametrically opposed forms throws all the parts of a whole work into sharp relief and creates a high level of visual tension. Perhaps the best representative in this vein is her bon-bon dish *Tangled Garden* (*see inside front cover*). A raised floral form is attached through the smallest possible space to a constructed geometric base. The flower flutters open into an undulating rim, the material has been allowed to tear open at one ridge and tendrils of wire float in natural, tangled asymmetry around the whole. Depth and shimmering color are attained through patination and silver plating on copper. This flower is a result of a material's response to process; stretching, compressing, tearing and coloring have a particular and unique effect on copper. In contrast, the base is a predetermined design, a mathematical pedestal, clean-edged and cerebral. It is visually attached to the floral form by color and by the linear divisions that mark the edges of its constructed triangles. These lines echo and repeat natural textured ridges in the flower's form, eventually flowing out of its top to become the pins that support the flying tendrils. These lines are entirely formal in the maker's concern. They are constructed to fit within a situation. In all, the combination of geometric pedestal and organic flower creates a strong visual tension, and the very small point at which the two meet is a fitting comment on the repose of the whole. The piece is harmonious in a particularly contemporary manner. It is nearly serene in its acceptance of dichotomy and nearly unified in its delicate melding of the two parts.

A combination of geometry and nature is certainly not new to artists. It was one of the great fascinations for Renaissance painters as they developed a mathematical approach to linear perspective and it has been reassessed in numerous stylizations by artists, craftsmen and designers ever since. But a serious interaction of those opposites on an abstract level, an interface of geometry and nature, is not commonly worked ground.

Ritual and Function

Ritual becomes a consideration in Betteridge's bon-bon dishes because of its attachment to function. "For me, the functional object is a way to celebrate the many 'rituals' of our lives, rituals we may not be aware of, but which, when celebrated, become meaningful, beautiful and formal. . ." Ritual formalizes the relationship between function and object and requires the maker to translate effects from the external world into the internal world of the object. The object becomes ceremonial when its function is revered as meaningful and when the maker of the object translates such meaning into refined form and precious dress. The function becomes beautiful when the object is given formal stature and allowed its intrinsic meaning. The external function is internalized as form. The object itself thus takes on a meaning of its own, referring back to the ceremonial activity that has been the impetus for its final form.

Ritual is evident in the fine, detailed



Coffee Pot for Six Friends, sterling silver and acrylic, 33.5 x 22.5 cm, 1988; **opposite:** *Tot Cup for an Insomniac*, sterling silver and Seiko watch, antique enamel watch face on bottom, 15.5 x 9 cm, 1983

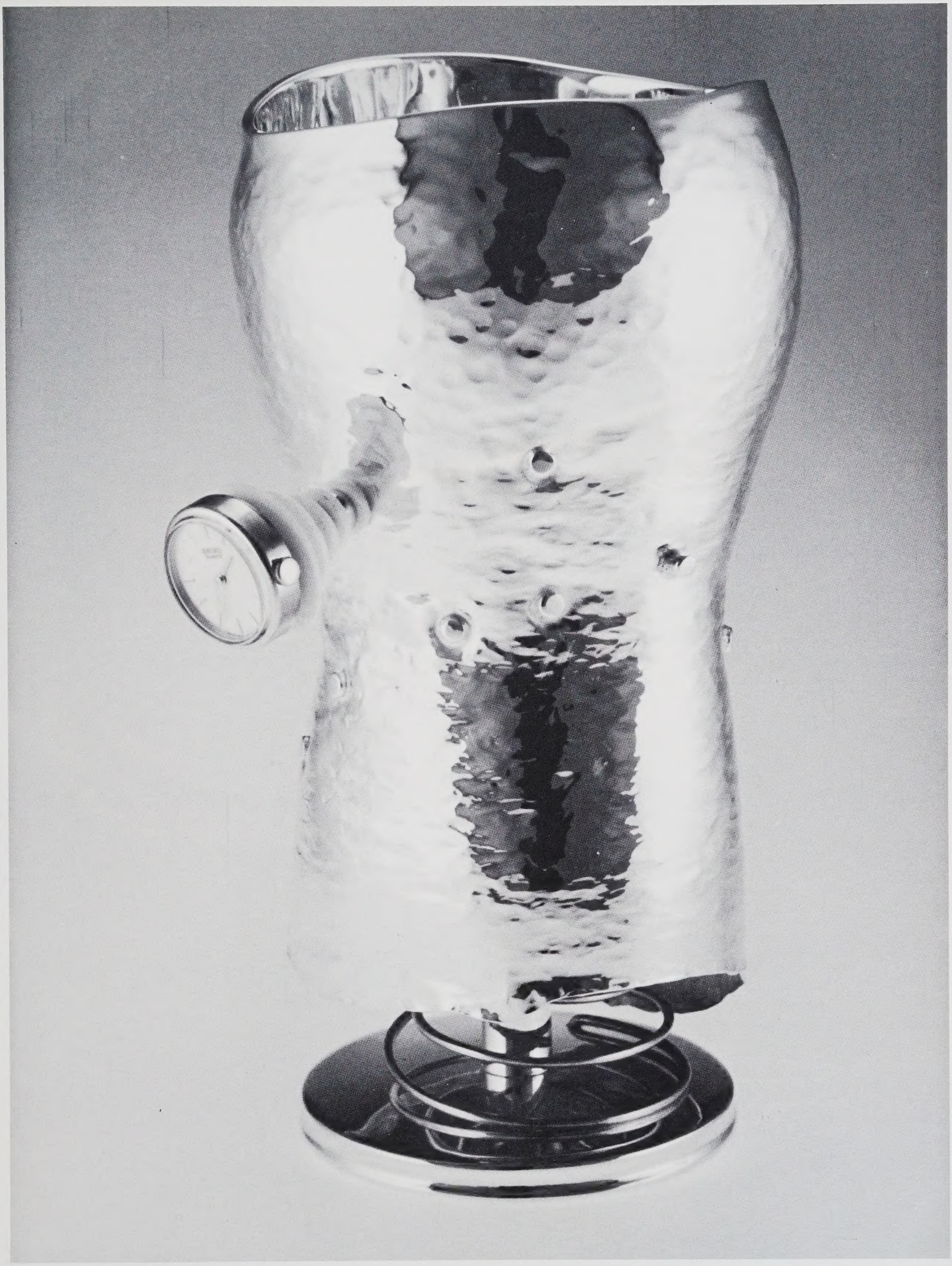
touches that are very much a part of Betteridge's work—the elevation of a bon-bon dish, the doormouse inside the Madhatter's tea pot, the gem floating inside the brandy snifter, the bee inside the honey pot, the pedestal under a functional flower-shaped bowl. Ritual encompasses Betteridge's various approaches to esthetics and ceremony governs her decisions in design.

Betteridge's deep attachment to the idea of function is critical to her work. She has stated that she is primarily concerned with the functional object and the importance of this attitude is its impact on her esthetics, resulting in her combinations of abstraction and literal interpretation, symbolism and purely formal design. Function is an integral part of the craft tradition and Betteridge is essentially a traditionalist. For much of her career she has eschewed working outside of silver or gold and this choice has allowed her to unfold a personal style by skillfully working the tactile qualities of those particular metals. While her ideas have taken contemporary form, shaped by the time in which she studied and her own personality, they are informed by the ageless ideas and necessities of function, noble or humble, raised to a ritualistic level and a respect for materials and handworking techniques.

It has been said that the forms of handcrafted work are governed by pleasure and that they transform the everyday utensil into a sign of participation. Betteridge has worked within this ideological context since her earliest days as a goldsmith. Her mature work reflects the thoughtful nature of such a path and a developed sense of the kind of ritual that participation has come to mean, and this is a measure of her success. Yet, her work is also showing signs of formal change and reassessment at a mature point of attainment, and this is the measure of an individual's response to the rapid changes of a modern environment. What remains is the further unfolding of a formal esthetic, whether organic, geometric or composite, which will always be based on the initial premises of pleasure and ritual.

A retrospective exhibition of the work of Lois Etherington Betteridge opened at the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton, Ontario in December of 1988 and will travel to various venues in Canada through 1990. An illustrated catalog with essay by Ross Fox accompanies the exhibit. For more information, contact the Art Gallery of Hamilton, 123 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario L8P 4S8 Canada (416-527-6610).

Carole Hanks is a teaching master in Art and Craft History at the School of Crafts and Design, Sheridan College, Oakville, Ontario. Her research is concerned with the history of craft and its links with technology.



RICHARD REINHARDT DISCONTINUOUS CONTINUITY

by Marian Pritchard

Richard Reinhardt's best-known pieces today are silver bracelets, constructed in concave or convex forms that curve smoothly and logically in a circle. Intermingled with these simple forms are forged, applied wires that gently scatter and break as if they were trying to redirect the curve. Despite their inconsistent pathways, these parts continue the circle. Reinhardt uses the term "discontinuous continuity" to describe the design. To me, that characterization applies as much to his metalsmithing career as to his work.

Reinhardt was born in Philadelphia in 1921 and developed an interest in art in elementary school. He vividly recalls learning the rudiments of design, like "axial balance," "radial design" and "repetition in a field" during his early art studies. "They just clicked with me," he says, but I smiled, thinking that these concepts of 60 years ago have surfaced in the circularity, counterbalance and movement of his current work. Reinhardt obviously enjoyed art, since he paid 50 cents for Saturday morning classes with Earl Metz, who had graduated from the Philadlephia Museum School of Industrial Arts (now the University of the Arts). "When people with good jobs were making $6 or $7 a week, $3 or $4 a Saturday morning was good money," Reinhardt recalls. Sometimes as many as eight children painted, drew from plaster casts or modeled clay in these classes.

During his West Philadelphia High School years, Reinhardt chose college preparatory courses. As part of his curriculum, he took a sheet metal course from his father, who taught tinsmithing and wrought ironwork. "My father was a little harder on me because he was afraid I would embarass him, which I did one time. While he was showing us how to lay out a funnel or something like that on the blackboard, I fell asleep and he yelled at me, real loud – it shook me up." Reinhardt describes himself as an average student who excelled at physical education, shop and art.

In 1939, from a student body of 4000–5000, three students competed for the Art Scholarship to the Philadelphia Museum School of Industrial Arts. Because the decision to choose one was so difficult, Harriet T. Biddle, a friend of an office worker at school, funded two tuitions so that all three students could attend. So, Reinhardt entered PMSIA in 1939 as one of the three applicants.

"I was bound and determined to be a painter, a Michelangelo of the 40s," reflects Reinhardt. "I loved to draw and paint. . . I did real well. . . and finally achieving good grades and seeing my work on the wall was a good thing for me. It was the first time I started to get some feeling of personal pride or control. I could, by working hard, do something."

His father, who never had a college degree, predicted that the future would require people to have one, and so encouraged his son to study Art Education,

Left: *Saturn*, hollowed domed bracelet with cuts and flying ribs, sterling silver, forged and fabricated, 2¼ x 1¾ x 1¼". Photo: Wayne Cozzolino, **Above:** *Middle Journey*, sterling silver bracelet, hollow domed with interior movement, forged and fabricated, 2⅛ x 1¾ x 1". Photo: Wayne Cozzolino

which in 1940–41 was the only degree granted at PMSIA. Reinhardt painted, as others did, in the Illustration Department, but one semester he bravely slipped into a jewelry class taught by Douglas Gilchrist. "He was very near-sighted and he couldn't tell who was in class. I used to sneak in there because I was going with Hazel (Hazel Georgette Scott, later Mrs. Richard Reinhardt) and I wanted to make her jewelry. I made rings and simple bands. I twisted wire and soldered it together. When he looked through his bottle glasses, I wondered if he could tell I didn't belong there. School was very strict. But I remember love conquering my fear. I knew I could never buy Hazel anything but maybe I could make her some things."

At the end of his junior year, Reinhardt quit school to support the war effort. He worked as a patent draftsman for the Edward G. Budd Company, which made streamlined trains and tanks. Six months later, he joined the Marine Corps. Eventually, he was stationed at Parris Island, South Carolina, as a drill instructor. In September, 1942, he married Hazel Scott and they lived together on the island, until three or four days after their son was born, when Reinhardt was shipped out to Guam as a platoon sargeant. "I left the Marine Corps early," he recalls "because I had a lot of points, and I immediately went back to school [PMSIA] for the spring semester."

Back in the Art Ed program, he was required to take Crafts for Elementary Schools from Virginia Cute, who had replaced Douglas Gilchrist. The class included such activities as leatherworking, chip carving and etching on celluloid as well as jewelrymaking. It would be the only formal class in jewelry that Reinhardt would ever attend.

The following fall, the school grew from 300 to 1250 students due to the flood of returning G.I.s. Reinhardt was asked to teach perspective drawing and to help in Virginia Cute's class. "Virginia was smart enough to realize that the classes were going to be full of G.I.s and to have a

man, a big man, who was an ex-marine, and also capable as an assistant, would be a good thing. "And it was," he remembers. He graduated in June, 1947 and continued to teach at the school.

With Cute's encouragement, Reinhardt won a national competition to attend one of the month-long silversmithing workshops sponsored by Handy & Harman, refiners and dealers of precious metals, at the Rhode Island School of Design. At the 1948 conference and as an assistant at the 1949 conference, Reinhardt learned stretching and raising techniques from Baron Erik Fleming, court silversmith to the King of Sweden. Reinhardt and other notable participants, including Alma Eikerman, Fred Miller and Harold Stacey, produced a wide variety of work that was exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and eventually toured the country.

Darts & Spears, hollow domed bracelet with cuts, sterling silver, forged and fabricated, 2⅝" d. inside. Photo: Wayne Cozzolino

In 1953, Virginia Cute left the school to head the Occupational Therapy Department at the University of Pennsylvania. Reinhardt became director of the Department of Jewelry and Silversmithing and then in 1955 shifted to the larger and more popular Industrial Design Department. He still worked with metals in his class on Materials and Fabrication Techniques, and he continued to supplement his income outside of school with numerous commissions. A hiatus from metalworking followed when a fellow teacher, who had his own design firm, asked him to make some large boardroom tables for the new Penn Center Complex. Woodworking orders consumed his free time, as he also began to design interiors. He knew he needed to hire help to keep up with the demand, but he preferred making the work himself to running a business. After careful consideration, he completely stopped woodworking to concentrate on his school activities.

Reinhardt became a professor and by 1967 was assistant dean of faculty for the school, which by then had changed its name to Philadelphia College of Art. During 1969–75, he was consecutively acting dean of faculty, appointed dean of administration and appointed dean of faculty. With a change of presidency in 1975, he resigned to return to teaching metals and to begin new work of his own in silver. Administrative responsibilities did not subside, however. In 1980, he chaired the Craft Department, and in 1985, he agreed to work as dean of visual arts for a school that needed continuity as it moved to become the University of the Arts.

Reinhardt's metalsmithing career separates into two distinct phases. The first starts around 1948 when he attended the Handy & Harman workshops. A 1949 sugar bowl, made in Baron Fleming's workshop, exemplifies the first phase of Reinhardt's career. The barely noticeable stretch marks give a liveliness to the surface. The base ring, the circular handle and the break between lid and bowl define parallel planes that contrast with the full and continuous volume of the container. The elegant twisted wires appear with great variety in his silversmithing, and, years later, on the bracelets. The wires appear to reflect Reinhardt's interest in arms and armor, including swordmaking. (He made his own bayonet during his Marine service.) Apparently, the original twist functioned to prevent a swordsman's grip from slipping if blood dripped on the handle. The decorative function has long ago replaced the practical consideration, but in Reinhardt's sugar bowl, the wire handle grip enhances both the function and the esthetic. Rising from empty space within the ring, the abstracted forms look like pairs of oval leaves defining the cardinal points. If the shapes did originate from images of leaves, Reinhardt has carried the stylization beyond the more naturalistic representations of the Swedes of his day.

Swedish influence dominated the work of metalsmiths in the late 40s and 50s. Reinhardt felt that he didn't have the technical training of those in Sweden, but he had a "notion of what I could do with my skills in that direction. I tried not to make it Swedish because I couldn't." Ultimately, he ended up fabricating those pieces that the Swedes would have stretched or raised in one piece. Sometimes he even fabricated details, which had a decorative tradition in repoussé. Two books of special importance, neither of which were in English, Sigurd Persson's *Modernt Svenskt Silver* and *David Anderson, 1876–1951*, provided a pictorial record of current Swedish taste. Reinhardt recalls that the Swedish tradition incorporated designs of leaves or balls and emphasized a verticality in the shapes of the vessels. His coffee pot of 1949 reflects the influence of Swedish style that Reinhardt had emulated through his own experimen-

tation with technique.

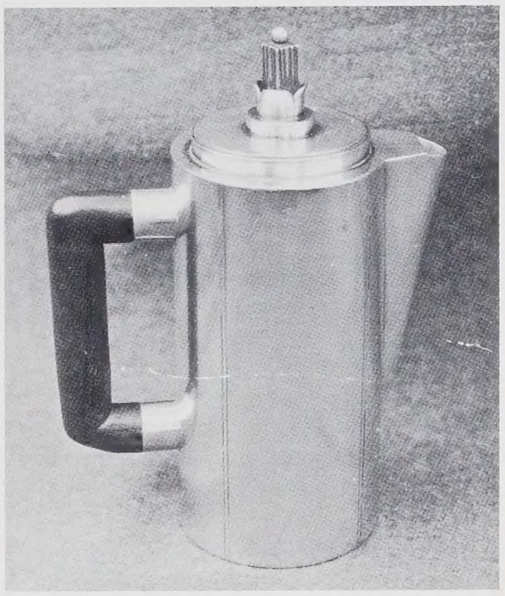
In general, Reinhardt's pieces are crafted to function properly, with individual components esthetically integrated yet often maintaining their own identity. The container part of the vessel becomes a shiny volume with a clean shape, perhaps elongated in the Swedish tradition. Spouts, handles and knobs often define themselves by proportions larger than those found on classical prototypes. Decoration embellishes a particular area, perhaps a base, maybe a knob or handle, in an integrated manner. Twisted wire, recessed in a groove, lies flush with an outside surface. Beads build an edge. Applied cut shapes contrast the foreground from the background. Piercing activates a flat plane. Small forms sit within larger ones and oxidized sections break up the reflectivity of the metal.

Years of art classes at an early age probably helped Reinhardt to develop his innate sense of design. I think, as well, though, that his desire to work the metal in a way he knew best helped to define his esthetics. He raised and stretched but mostly he fabricated because in that way he could best figure out how to construct what he wanted. By joining part to part and piece to piece, he must have been accutely aware of proportion and balance. Many of the decorative details obviously stem from an interest in the technical processes of twisting, piercing, adding, scoring.

In a few instances, Reinhardt used symbolic imagery for decoration. For example, a *chi rho* marking on a flagon used for the Eucharist probably came from a picture of Baron Fleming's work, which in turn had roots in Early Christian Art. He incorporated hearts on his wedding crowns to refer to Cupid and Valentine. In making a chalice for an Art Alliance Show in Philadelphia in 1949, he constructed a wooden stem with three indents curving and joining into one. He thought about the wood as the material of the cross and the indents as manifestations of the Trinity. By adding this imagery, Reinhardt seemed to be affirming the functional context of the object. The symbolism of the flagon and chalice specified the liturgical use, and the hearts of the crowns denoted the traditional sign of love. Reinhardt perhaps employed these symbols not only because they referred to the way the object would be used, but because he enjoyed working with the thought behind the symbol itself.

In the 1950s, Reinhardt made Swedish crowns for three different brides. He made the first for a student who had heard him talk about Baron Fleming's crowns. Developed from 10th-century prototypes, woven with twigs and flowers, the metal crowns were traditional in Swedish Lutheran wedding ceremonies. By custom, the crown passed from mother to daughter, and two of Reinhardt's crowns have been used in this way. Reinhardt mentions that the crowns with which he was most familiar, including a large one in the Swedish Museum in Philadelphia, looked like they had been made by repoussé. He fabricated all of his crowns, including the details, because he did not feel he knew enough to shape the metal using repoussé techniques. This perseverance in making work as best he could resulted in unique pieces despite their derivation from traditional prototypes. He fabricated his first crown out of almost 157 parts. Stylized leaf forms rise vertically to look like Gothic finials, while hearts border the base of the crown. Holes in the bottom edge provide the mechanism by which one sews the crown to the veil. The second crown, with its five triangular points and applied wires, eliminated the feeling of foliage even more than the first. Separated and parallel twisted wires define the edges at the base of the crown, worn, in this case, by sliding a long pin with a heart on it through the crown and hair. The five points on the last crown were constructed from open, upside-down heart shapes. This work, with its linear activity and felicitous feeling, captures some of the spirit of the original repoussé crowns. Reinhardt may not have intended to replicate exactly the traditional prototypes but,

Sugar Bowl, sterling silver, 1949



Coffee pot, sterling silver, 1949. This piece was destroyed

while employing a different means of construction, he managed to achieve similar expressiveness.

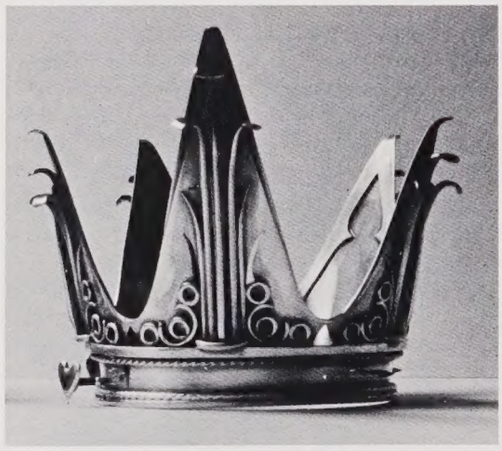
When Reinhardt returned to metal in 1975 (his second metalsmithing phase), he started, as he had in his college days, by making bracelets for his wife. "The notion that you could make a bracelet like a hollow handle without putting a top on it was a revelation for me," he says. He liked concavity because "the curve moves in two directions at the same time." In working the concave curve, he saw another bracelet as a convex form. He set out to complete a piece in the form in which it was conceived, and if new ideas materialized before he finished a piece, he jotted them down to be explored later. Reinhardt's conception of "discontinuous continuity" takes many forms in these bracelets. he says, "the idea of the discontinuous came from attempting to put forged wires on the bracelets in some manner so that they seemed to be going all around the bracelet in a moving way. I wanted to put one, two, three, four rings going around, that seemed not to be parallel but to be going in and out of one another, and yet seemed to be kind of continuous. I made a couple of bracelets where I wanted to make it look as if a guy simply wrapped a lot of wire around his wrist and let it go, and it got semitangled, yet you could untangle it, and it would be one straight piece of wire." He also uses the analogy of looking at a wrapped ball of string, the strands of which go in different directions but

unravel as one. The challenge to him was to build a visual image with separate wires that ultimately would appear as one wire but, upon closer examination, are not.

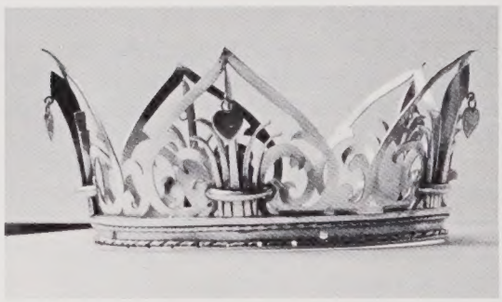
Reinhardt envisions the end of the string sometimes starting in the middle of the bracelet. During construction, he builds a round unit with all wires in place and then cuts out the 26mm gap so that the bracelet can be slipped onto the wrist. Visually, the eye skips right across that space. Some of the bracelets, like that in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, are particularly complicated in that the overall form is based on the spiral instead of the circle. In these cases, the main sections screw together. The torque, another variation, is basically two semicircular bracelets joined on a central axis.

When I first saw a Reinhardt bracelet by itself, the visual weight of the object surprised me, especially since it was made for a small, female wrist. Yet, when I saw the bracelet being worn, its weight seemed appropriate and its boldness immediately captured my attention. Reinhardt likes the durability, strength and mass that he gains when he uses a heavier stock. "If it's supposed to be 20 gauge, I'll make it 18. I equate weight with value and value with mass," he says. Edges and endings look strong. There is a phsyciality reminiscent of some of his earlier vessels. However, as there is a kind of mind game with the wires, there is also some play with mass. The visual weight appears heavier than the actual weight. The highly reflective surfaces can dissolve the mass in strong light. Oxidized areas, which absorb light, cut patterns but do not destroy the solidity.

A 1985 bracelet, essentially a concave,



Wedding Crown, sterling silver, 1950s



Wedding Crown, sterling silver, 1950s

undulating curve, gives a glimpse into Reinhardt's interest in reducing a piece to its minimal form. It is a slitted hollow convex curve, reminiscent of a whimsical mouth. Although Reinhardt has mentioned an interest in the human body as an analogue, his overriding concern for "discontinuous continuity" prevails as the underlying reason for form. It is the circle itself, as well as the process of fabricating and soldering, that most often dictates the conception.

Reinhardt has started to take away metal from his more minimal pieces. Just as a concave curve turned over becomes convex, subtracting lines is the reverse process of adding wires. Reinhardt has scored metal before, but in recent pieces lines and cut shapes pierce the entire surface. Very narrow cuts become decorative black voids against polished metal. As the cuts widen into open shapes, light penetrates across the space to reveal the inside wall. Reinhardt not only explores this potential but expands the possibilities of filling the void between the front and back of the work with complicated substructres. The front of a Reinhardt piece always seems dominant becuase of its visual complexity but occasionally cuts from the back through to the front give the back side unexpected visual interest.

Reinhardt explores this expanded view of outside, inside and backside in both his new belt buckles and bracelets. A striking buckle is *Mysterious Passage*, which contains four layered sheets with overlapping pebble-shaped cutouts. The top layer and its neighboring planes define a smooth and shiny surface, different from the complexities below. Slightly projecting edges on the face of the buckle prevent the light from totally flattening out the surface, assuring three dimensionality. This must have been the piece Reinhardt at first lightheartedly called *Root Canal* or *Coronary Bypass*.

The bracelet *Full Circle with Cones under Cuts* resembles a belt buckle as well. Convex cones looking like forms halfway between shore-washed pebbles and mollusks' feet seem to want to move toward their pointed ends. The closely contoured surrounding space limits the environment of each cone, while the gently convexed outer surface connects the units into a small colony. The bracelet could have been a slice from a tall cylinder, which might have revealed the other ends of the cones. Three holes of different sizes pierce through the hollow interior to the inside surface. The cones angle from the outside edge to the interior space.

Despite a career that had its twists and turns, there is continuity in Reinhardt's strong commital to metalsmithing. When his teaching and administrative duties took him away from the bench, he treasured his tools, the many his father gave him, the old victrolas he fashioned into soldering units, the collection he bought from the Handy & Harman workshops. During the less productive metalsmithing years, he polished them instead of giving them away. We are grateful that he remains "always excited about the way you could do things. There is a sense of accomplishment and excitement and pleasure in being able to do it."

Reinhardt's accomplishments extend beyond the rewards of personal gratification. His career and work helped to define the development of contemporary crafts in the United States. He persevered in making work when opportunities for training and sustaining craftspeople were limited. In following the Swedish styles of the 50s, he pursued his interests in cutting metal, twisting wire and joining parts to make pieces of singular expression. In exploring the issues of circularity, and broken and continuing movement, he produced bracelets and torques that clearly communicated these visual and intellectual interests. Reinhardt's use of fabrication techniques to make jewelry, although significant, is in my mind less important than his ability to creatively succeed in integrating challenging content with form specific to him alone. Reinhardt's new belt buckles and bracelets attest to his continuing artistic commitment.

Marian Pritchard is assistant professor at Moore College of Art and Design in Philadelphia, where she teaches 20th-Century Crafts. This summer she will travel for a month in Italy to teach a course on Italian craft history to students enrolled in U.S. art schools.

Cones Under Cuts, belt buckle, sterling silver, forged and fabricated, 2¾ x 1½ x ¾". Photo: Wayne Cozzolino

CHRISTIAN SCHMIDT
THE NEW NATURALISM

BENCHMARK

Christian Schmidt is infamous for his contribution to the 1964 "Fiber, Clay, Metal" exhibition at the St. Paul Art Center, where he entered a so-called Medal of Honor *by the fictitious Abraham Isitshit as a protest against the lack of skill and poor quality of many entries to the juried show (of which he was one of the four jurors). The piece was not only accepted but it gained special recognition by being published as the frontis to the catalog.*

A native of Minneapolis, Schmidt studied jewelry with Philip Morton in 1951 before receiving a B.S. in Art Education from the University of Minnesota. However, he gave up teaching early in his career to produce his own line of semiproduction work, which was partially cast to make the pieces available at a more modest price. His award-winning work, which sought to express the vitality and organic irregularities of living things could be classified as "the new naturalism," a theme shared by a number of jewelers around the country, including his good friend Ruth Roach.

While Schmidt died prematurely in 1974, he made a lasting contribution to metalsmithing and jewelry through his keen sense of observation and his ability to translate his vision in both his work and his words. Here we have asked his wife Janet to recall his encounters with art and nature.

Abraham Isitshit, Medal of Honor, Mixed Media, 1964

by Janet Schmidt

Christian Schmidt worked with organic forms; the metamorphosis of the butterfly, the gill structure of a mushroom cap, the thorax of an insect – these excited and challenged him. Accompanying Christian on his expeditions into the woods around our Minnesota home, seeking dried plants, weathered bones or skeletal leaves, was always a learning experience for our three sons and me. I remember particularly one of these forays when a caterpillar was found. The excitement of this discovery was further heightened when the caterpiller was identified as the beautiful Monarch butterfly, a species that travel 2500 miles in two months to winter in a tiny 30 by 50 mile patch of rugged, mountainous forest in south-central Mexico. Thus began Christian's fascination with the butterfly metamorphosis.

Photographed through the close-up lens in our home studio, the caterpillar began a series of mysterious biological transformations on its path toward maturity. Christian recorded his observations:

"After thoroughly gorging itself upon milkweed leaves, the caterpillar attached its tail to a twig by spinning a short connection of silk. Releasing its grip, it hung head-down, its body arched in a gentle hook. For the next eight hours it remained in this attitude, digesting its feast, interrupted only by slow, undulating contractions. The brilliant bands of yellow, black and white began to lose their intensity and gradually took on a green cast. It no longer appeared as large as before but became more elongated as its legs and feelers gradually shriveled.

"Suddenly, the skin split at the back and a shimmering emerald-green mass emerged. This triggered a response of continuous, almost violent motion. By expanding, contracting, quivering and swaying, the split extended the length of the caterpillar and the green-yellow-tinged chrysalis escaped from its banded transparent skin. Once liberated, its urgent motion subsided as it slowly shrunk to the cylindrical form, punctuated with glittering gold and black studs.

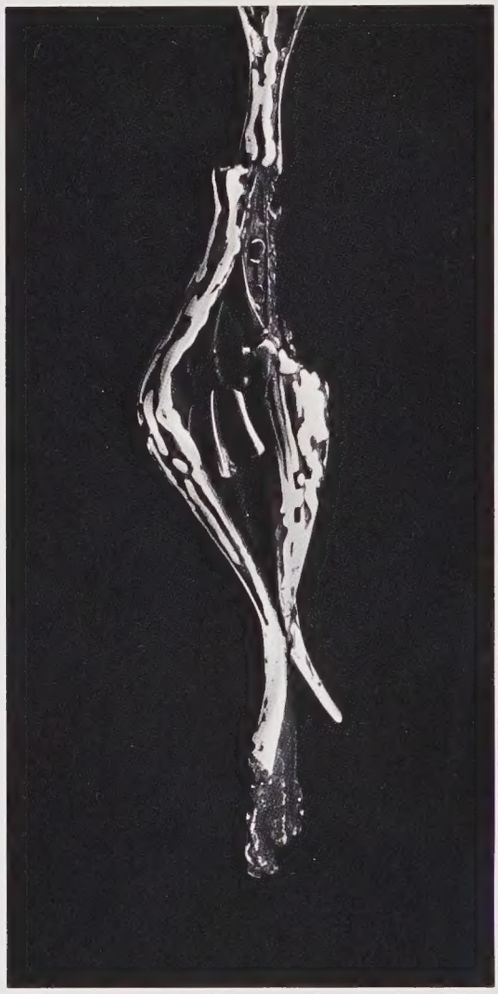
2. *Mushroom V*, fused silver with gold, 2 1/2", 1965. Photo: Christian Schmidt

"The first indication of emergence was a vertical split that opened slowly like a hinged portal as the butterfly forced its head down and outward. Once its legs were out, it clutched the chrysalis shell – and none too soon, because the heavy abdomen and crumpled wings tumbled out and the creature swung precariously by its delicate feet. It remained this way while body fluids throbbed into the wing structure, ironing out the wrinkles and extending the wings to their full length. After several hours of drying and hardening, it was ready for flight."

Metamorphosis was to be the theme of Christian's first sculpture. Many times he had been frustrated with the scale limitations of wearable jewelry, even though most of his pendant designs were conceived as small sculptures. The concept of *Metamorphosis I* (figure 1) offered additional frustrations for Christian as he searched for its translation in sculptural form: "Had I been working in a more plastic material," he wrote, "I would have begun pushing stuff around, hoping for a direction to occur, but instead I just sat and stewed."

He agonized for days wondering which path to take. He was looking for the essence of a caterpillar, a chysalis and a butterfly. As his frustration grew, he began sketching in self-defense: "Eventually, I decided to approach the problem by using a cocoonlike form – equivocal in character in that a single plane defined an intricate series of concave and convex volumes."

This vague idea generated the initial action, and ideas flowed as the metal took shape. "Additions that at first seemed exciting were pared away or completely removed as I groped along. The lower stem, for example, at one time terminated in large, rootlike members. As the work progressed, it became obvious that this area had been given too much emphasis, which defeated the total unity. It was reduced in three separate stages to its final form. Each time one area was changed, it usually affected the overall relationship, so that other areas had to be modified as well." In the end, however, Christian was



1. *Metamorphosis I*, fused silver sculpture, 8 1/2", 1967. Photo: Christian Schmidt

3. *Pod*, silver with gold casting holding thomsonite stone, 4", 1957. Collection: Ruth Roach heirs. Photo: Christian Schmidt

disappointed with the completed piece. His expectations for capturing dynamic change in a static object fell short of his goal.

The "mushroom series" was more successful as the irregular patterns, elongated ridges or folds and gill structure of the mushroom offered Christian many design variations with which to begin his investigations. His work evolved slowly and often he would repeat a sequence from the same design. He preferred to develop and refine an idea, exhausting the design possibilities before moving on to another concept. The first four *Mushrooms* utilized the cup-shaped crown and stem. These pieces were relatively flat and two-dimensional, with one side having definitely more ornamentation. Christian questioned these designs: "Suddenly, there came the realization that I had been adhering to an unquestioned traditional concept of the form of jewelry and had not been exploiting full use of the third dimension. Why couldn't a pendant be a totally three-dimensional hanging sculpture? Why shouldn't it have visual and structural coherence when seen from all directions?"

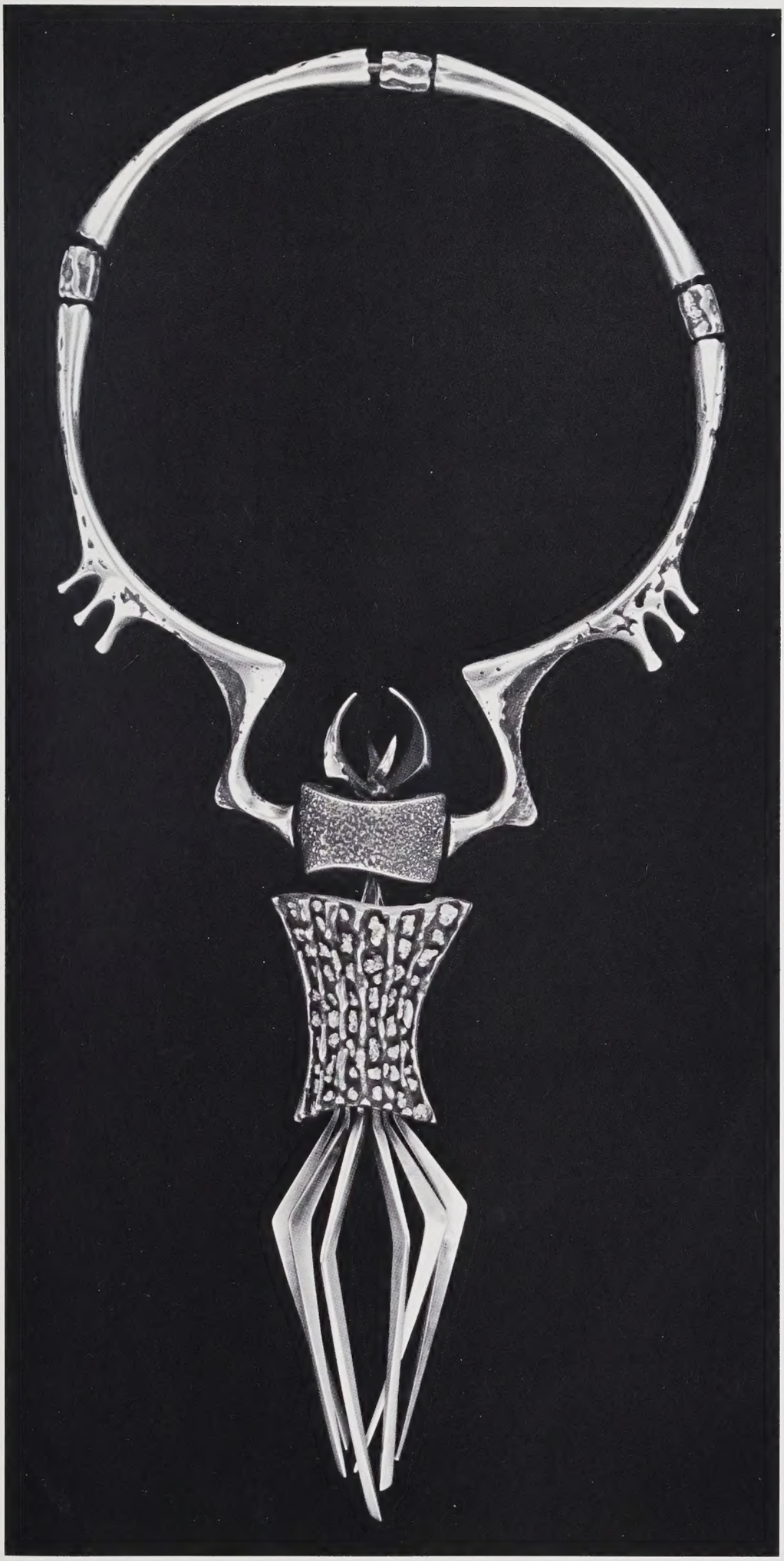
The following pendant *Mushroom V* (figure 2) was a departure. The volume of the mushroom became a three-dimensional hanging sculpture, though definitely wearable. Its simple, straightforward statement was pleasing. *Mushrooms VI* through *XI* became more elaborate. A moonstone became a focal point of one, silver spikes push up from another, a gold casting shimmers recessed at the base of the stemlike form in the final piece of the series.

The mushroom series led to other natural models like the milkweed pod. Christian viewed the pod as a nautral "shelter" for a spiny gold casting and an unusual stone (figure 3). Also, the shell could be a smooth oxidized surface or richly overlaid with many variations. The "pods" brought him early success, with awards at the 1956 "American Jewelry and Related Arts" in Rochester, New York and the 1957 and 1959 Midwest Designer Craftsmen competitions in Omaha, Nebraska. A seedpod pendant and a fused silver and ebony bracelet were selected for exhibit at the 1958 Brussels Worlds Fair.

The cylindrical series, which Christian also referred to as the "tin can series," derived from his knowlege of insect bodies. From past experiences, he remembered that a rich structural pattern would result from cutting into bundles of silver tubes after they were fused into a mass. Tubing of different diameters was bent from silver strips cut into two different lengths and bundled around a shaft of silver wire. Heat was applied to the bundle of tubing standing on end. Some tube ends melted down and some closed up while the silver binding wire melted, forming beaded patterns. This technique provided variations by changing the arrangement of the tubes. Textural variations were obtained through control of the fusion process leading to pitted surfaces that contrasted with smooth areas of metal. This direct fusing appealed to Christian because it enabled him to quickly implement his ideas.

My husband's last pieces, which were to be his final legacy, were a departure from his earlier work. On a larger scale, they were integrated as whole entities. One, *Cleopatra's Necklace* (figure 4), is an insect form with articulated segments. The center thorax area has rows of small gold nuggets set between fused vertical silver ribs. There was an intense urgency to complete these works before his untimely death in 1974.

Janet Schmidt is on the staff of The Minneapolis Institute of Arts and is a freelance violinist.



4. *Cleopatra's Necklace*, silver, gold, 12″, 1974. Photo: Gary Mortensen

Christian and I met while ushering for concerts at Northup Auditorium at the University of Minnesota, where he graduated in art education, with a minor in music, in 1956. In 1951 he had studied jewelrymaking with Philip Morton. He worked for a commercial ring firm in centrifugal casting for five years while working on his degree. He also taught jewelrymaking and design at the University of Minnesota, the St. Paul Gallery (now The Minnesota Museum of Art) and the Minneapolis School of Art (now The Minneapolis College of Art and Design) from 1956 to 1963.

In 1963, coinciding with moving into our unfinished house that we were building, Christian realized his dream of devoting full time to producing handcrafted jewelry. His formal teaching behind him, he developed a line of cast jewelry for sale through shops, museums and galleries. All custom orders for wedding bands and one-of-a-kind pieces, including a cast line of jewelry, were sold in our home studio. Christian wanted his family to be involved in the jewelry business. Our sons, Mark, Gray and Dale, were taught jewelry techniques at an early age. Each one became a skilled craftsman, also selling some of their work in the studio.

Christian Schmidt and Reid Hastie coauthored *Encounter with Art* (published in 1969 by McGraw-Hill), a book that analyzes the creative process and the problem of evaluating the quality of art. This was a major accomplishment that consumed many hours over a period of three years.

However, our life was not all work. There was time for sledding or for an impromptu game of softball. Friends and customers might be given a tour of our woods and stream or be asked to share the bounty of our huge vegetable garden. Snow shoeing on sparkling snow to pick up the mail and skating on the frozen stream were experiences to be remembered with pleasure by my sons and me.

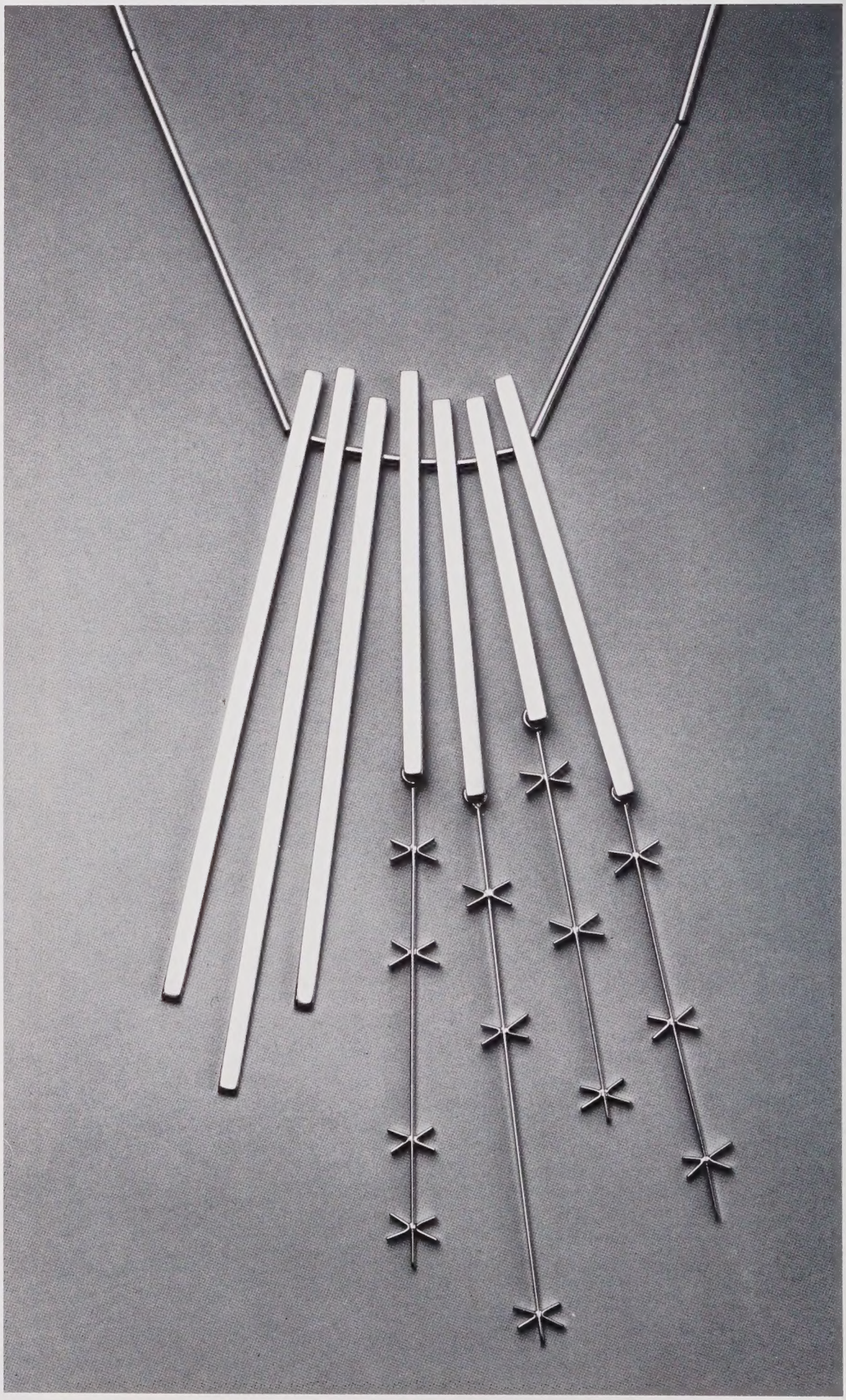
Photo: Janet Schmidt

A humanitarian in every sense, Christian would not hesitate to help his fellow man, whether offering a helping hand to a job that needed to be done or to an ecological problem. Not only did he use his camera for esthetic beauty but as a means of documenting the need for cleaning up the pollution in Sand Creek eight miles downstream from where we lived. This particular cause meant he curtailed all activities for several months to concentrate on correspondence to public officials who could most alleviate the problem. His documented slides were part of a lecture given to local schools and the city council. Nothing could deter him. His goal was not immediate but it was a beginning that led to the solution a few years later.

BETTY COOKE
TOTAL DESIGN IN JEWELRY

BENCHMARK

In the Spring 1959 issue of Craft Horizons, *entitled "U.S. Crafts in This Industrial Society," Editor Rose Slivka divides the American craftsman into three categories: artist-craftsman, production-craftsman and craftsman as designer-businessman. Clearly, in that era, Betty Cooke was the exemplar of the production-craftsman, as Slivka goes on to define: "those who make well-designed, high quality utilitarian products, producing a limited amount of each design for a regular market. This craftsman may have his own shop or he may have certain stores which he supplies. . . He may also be an artist-craftsman." Over 40 years of making work of elegant design, superb craftsmanship and simple statement in jewelry, Cooke, who lives and works in Baltimore, Maryland, is a role model for those craftspeople whose esthetic and design ideals will not be compromised by the demands of a fickle marketplace. We have asked Toni Lesser Wolf to interview Betty Cooke to provide a better understanding of her determination and her success.*



Centennial Pendant, silver, designed 1976; **right:** *Collar*, sterling, ebony, designed 1958; **below right:** *Forged Neckpiece*, sterling silver, designed 1948

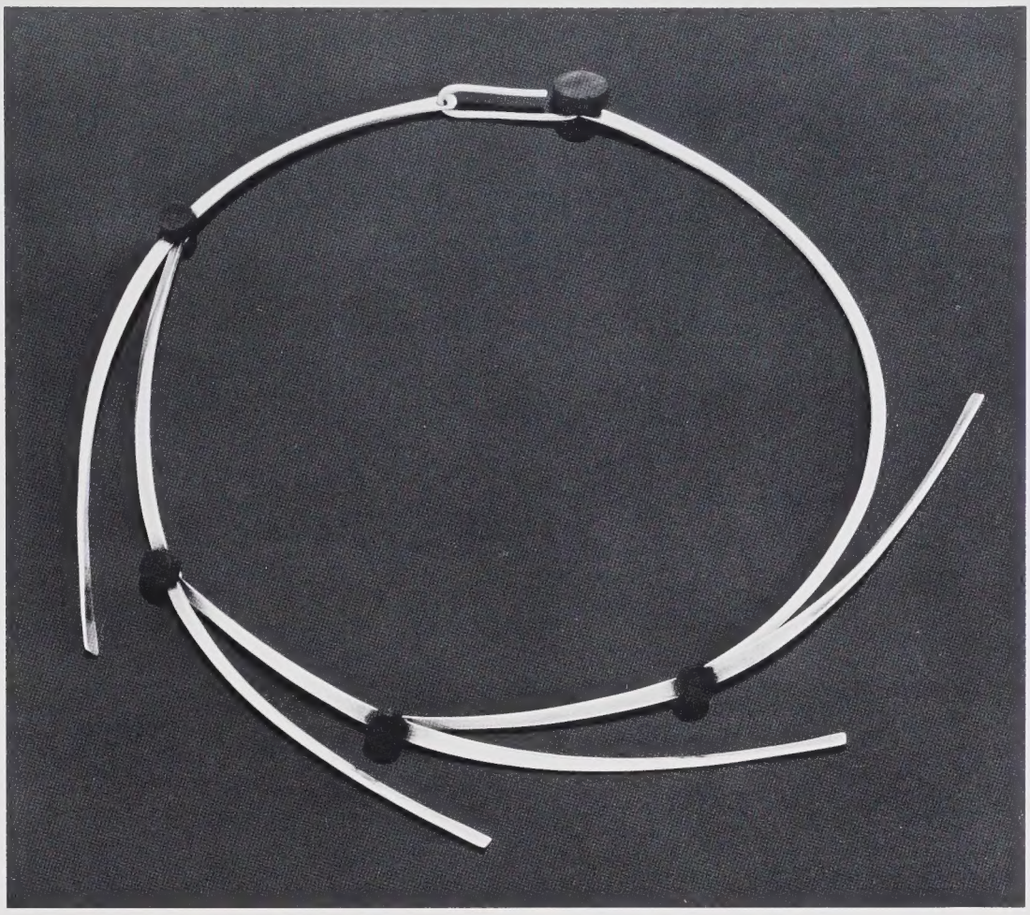
by Toni Lesser Wolf

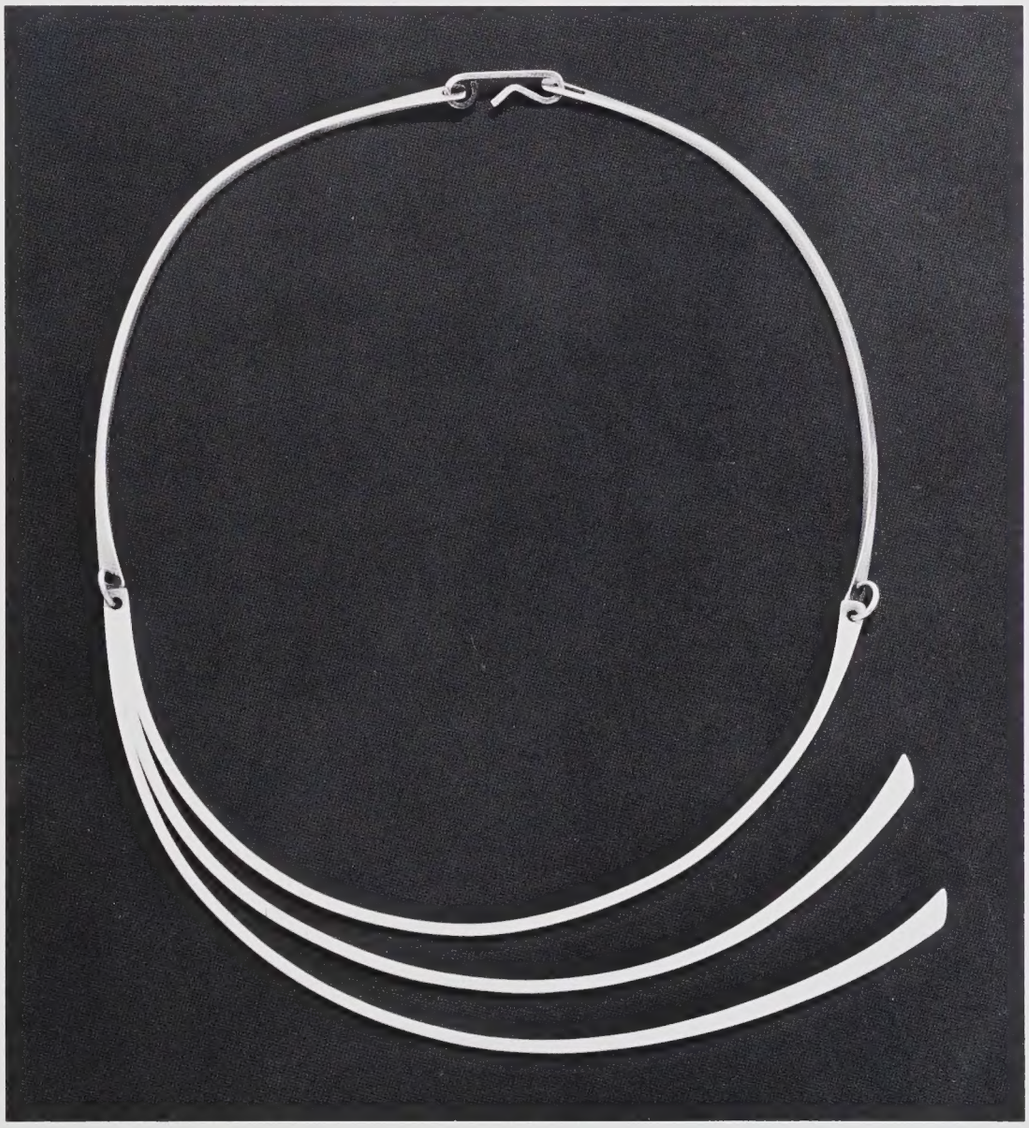
Betty Cooke has designed and fabricated simple, clean, straightforward expressions in wearable metal adornments since her introduction to metalsmithing in the mid-1940s. She has sold her jewelry, which stylistically has changed very little over the years, directly from her own studio, storefront and now retail store in Baltimore, Maryland, from the beginning. It is bought today by the grandchildren of her first customers.

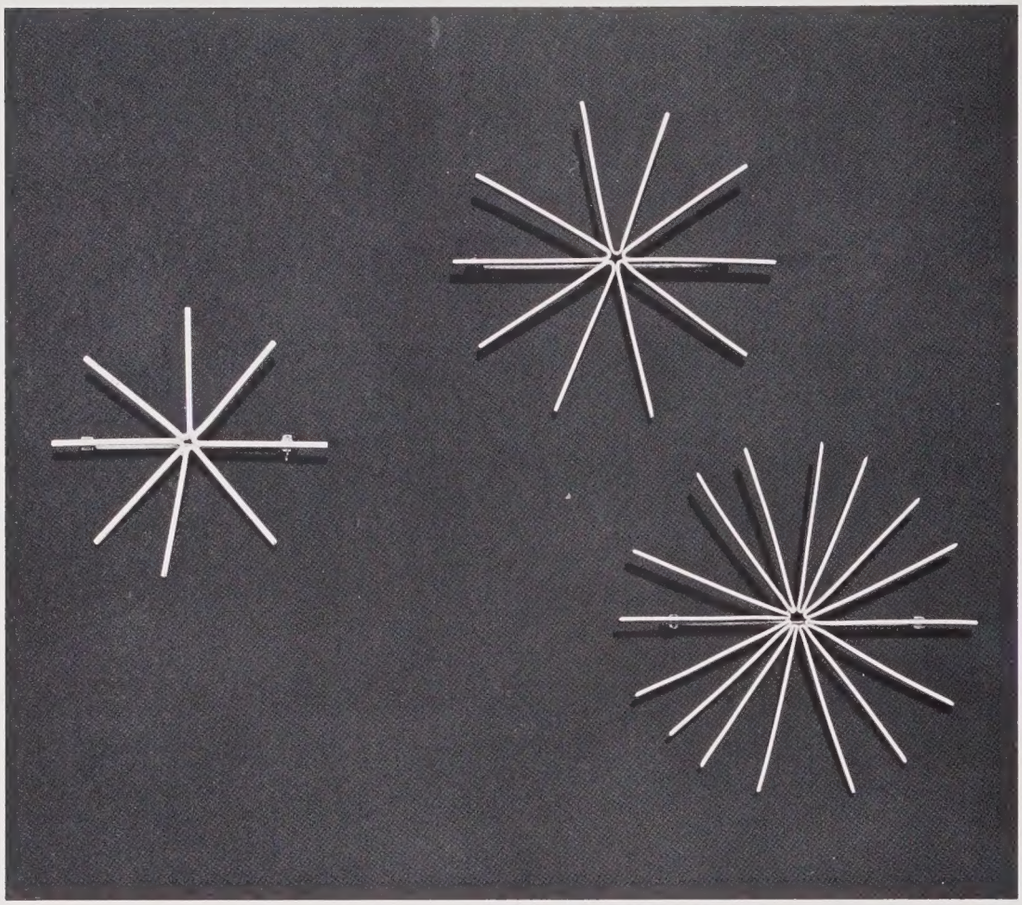
Cooke is a designer with an integrated approach. While her Baltimore home—a converted carriage house—is filled with an eclectic mix of furniture and objects, from a sleek black Saarinen sofa to sedate Colonial Windsor chairs, her jewelry maintains a quality of purity and respect for material. She strives to convey warmth rather than accede to the anonymous coldness of much geometrically conceived jewelry and design. The forms tie together in a totality, regardless of the diversity of materials (silver and black plexiglass, for example).

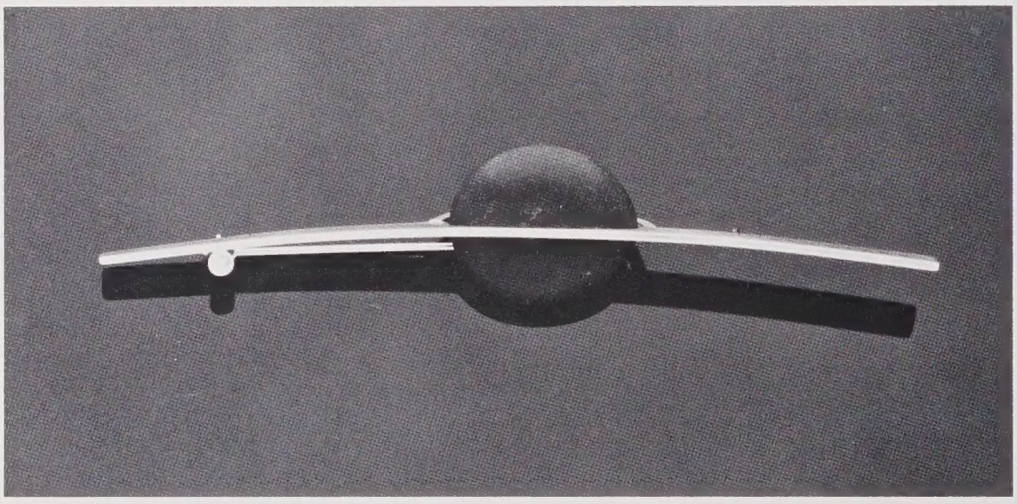
In her work Cooke instigates a dialogue between the spontaneous and the planned. She eschews the "organic" (her term) expressionism of Sam Kramer[1] and Art Smith[2], both of whom she considers "fine artists" and not jewelers or designers, due to the barely wearable nature of much of their output and the fact that the additional richness of content in their work has the potential to detract from, or might compete for attention with, the wearer. Yet, on the other hand, she doesn't reflect the constructivist premeditation of Margaret De Patta, either.[3] Cooke's unique approach serves to bridge the gap between these two extremes.

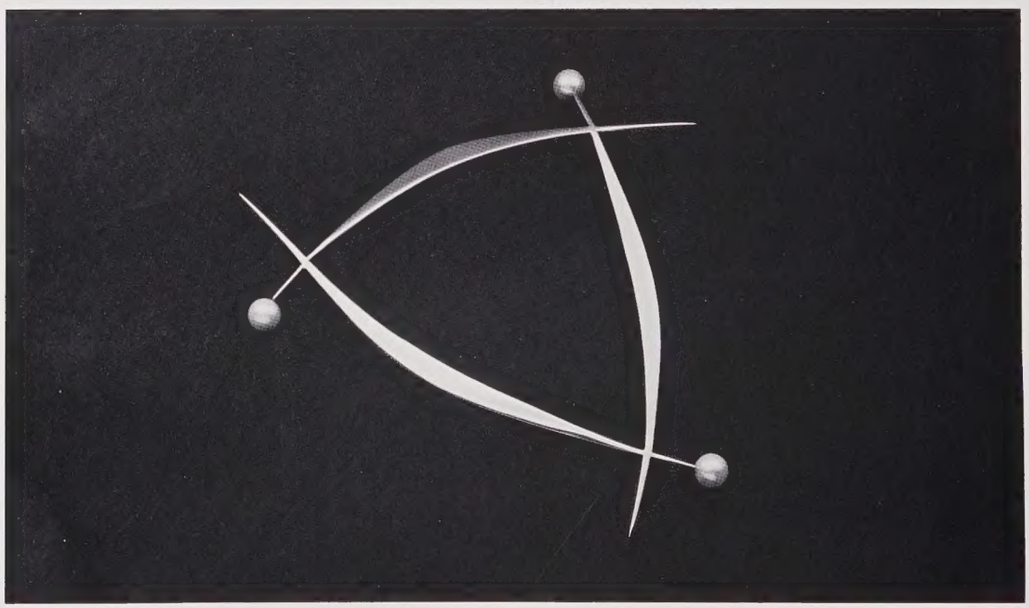
Cooke's jewelry is reminiscent of the large, gestural brushstrokes seen in both her watercolors and her persistent doodles. Although rejecting the amoeboid shapes used by Arp and Miro, she still creates "action" pieces based upon the curve. Although she occasionally explores the straight line, as well, that line is always straining to bend—never is it precisely angular. Maybe the "warmth" of her pieces comes from her use of this gestural shape. Her modus operandi involves choosing a curvilinear form from one of her myriad sketches and allowing it to develop into other shapes. She then refines the design, often modeling the prototype in paper until it is perfectly evolved, the goal being a subtle gracefulness.











After the initial idea has been formed, media and process are the basic elements from which Cooke creates her jewelry. Metal, wood, pebbles—all natural materials—are exploited until the limits of their intrinsic beauty are reached. Subtleties of color in stone striations and wood grains are emphasized and incorporated into the total design. Properties particular to silver are maximized. Part of the wire, for example, is left round, while the remainder is hammered to varying widths. Cooke doesn't want the viewer to forget the wire's humble beginnings—its inception through the drawplate.

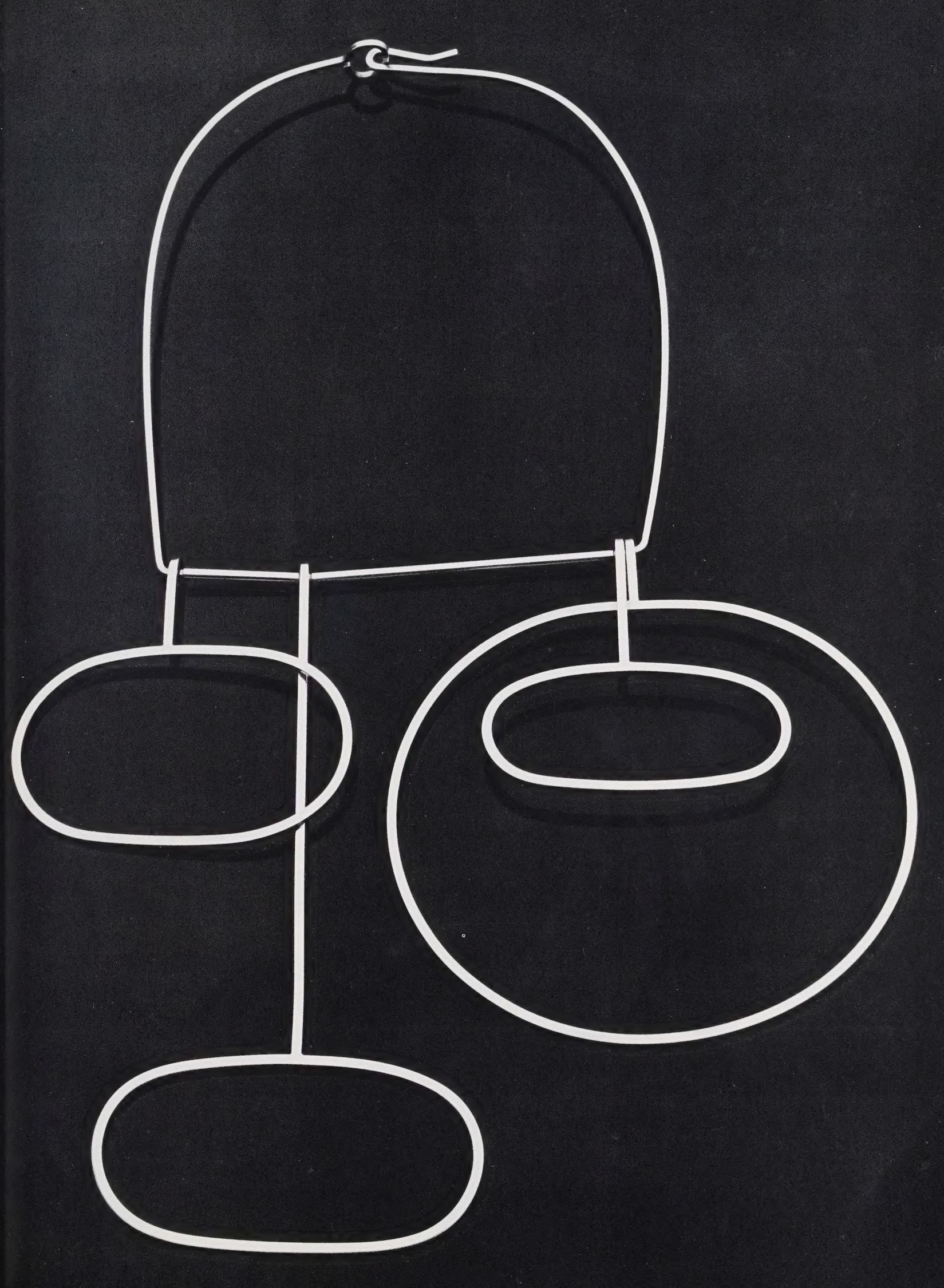
In 1946, Cooke received her B.F.A. from the Maryland Institute, College of Art. During her college years, she apprenticed to a local jeweler who taught her basic jewelrymaking skills. Directly after graduating, she was hired by the Institute to teach a course called "Design and Materials" that included jewelrymaking, welding and other metals skills to meet the demand of increased enrollment by the returning GIs.

As a child, Cooke visited the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, whose ancient and medieval jewelry collections made an impression on her. Later, she also admired the work of Alexander Calder, Harry Bertoia, Ed Wiener and Margaret De Patta. She identified with the "good design" movement, typified by the "Good Design" exhibitions held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in the 40s and 50s. She envisioned her product being sold through design stores such as Georg Jensen in New York (which eventually carried her bells and andirons) and Frasers in San Francisco, rather than art or craft galleries. In fact, in 1948, she literally "knocked on the door" of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, a museum with which she was familiar, due to their publication, *Design Quarterly*. Subsequently, her work was accepted into "Modern Jewelry Under Fifty Dollars," their 1948 exhibition in the Everyday Art Gallery.

Cooke's philosophy is that jewelry and accessories should be integrated in an uncomplicated manner with clothing design. Eventually, she had the opportunity to design jewelry for fashion designer Geoffrey Beane's runway shows in New York and Milan. A perfectionist, Cooke laminated her own wood for necklaces and brooches, and even dyed her own leather for belts.

Cooke's 15-foot wide by 20-foot deep two-and-a-half-story townhouse, which she bought in 1946, is situated on the "pastel block" in Baltimore, so named because

Top to bottom: *Star pins*, silver, numerous variations, designed since 1946; *Pin*, forged silver with pebble, c. 1950; *Pin*, silver with gray pearls, 1950; **right:** Neckpiece, silver, designed c. 1959
Photos: Jack Ramsdale



residents paint their houses a different shade every year. The first floor of this house became her first design outlet. Here she sold Japanese folk art, Noguchi lamps, pottery by Nancy Wickham, Robert Turner and Karen Karnes, as well as her own jewelry, bells and andirons. It was a reasonably successful venture, eventually expanding into the mirror-image house next door, which she purchased and broke through the connecting wall to create a larger floor space. She remained there until 1965, when she and her husband, William O. Steinmetz, opened The Store, Ltd. in the Village of Cross Keys, an upscale shopping mall not far from downtown.

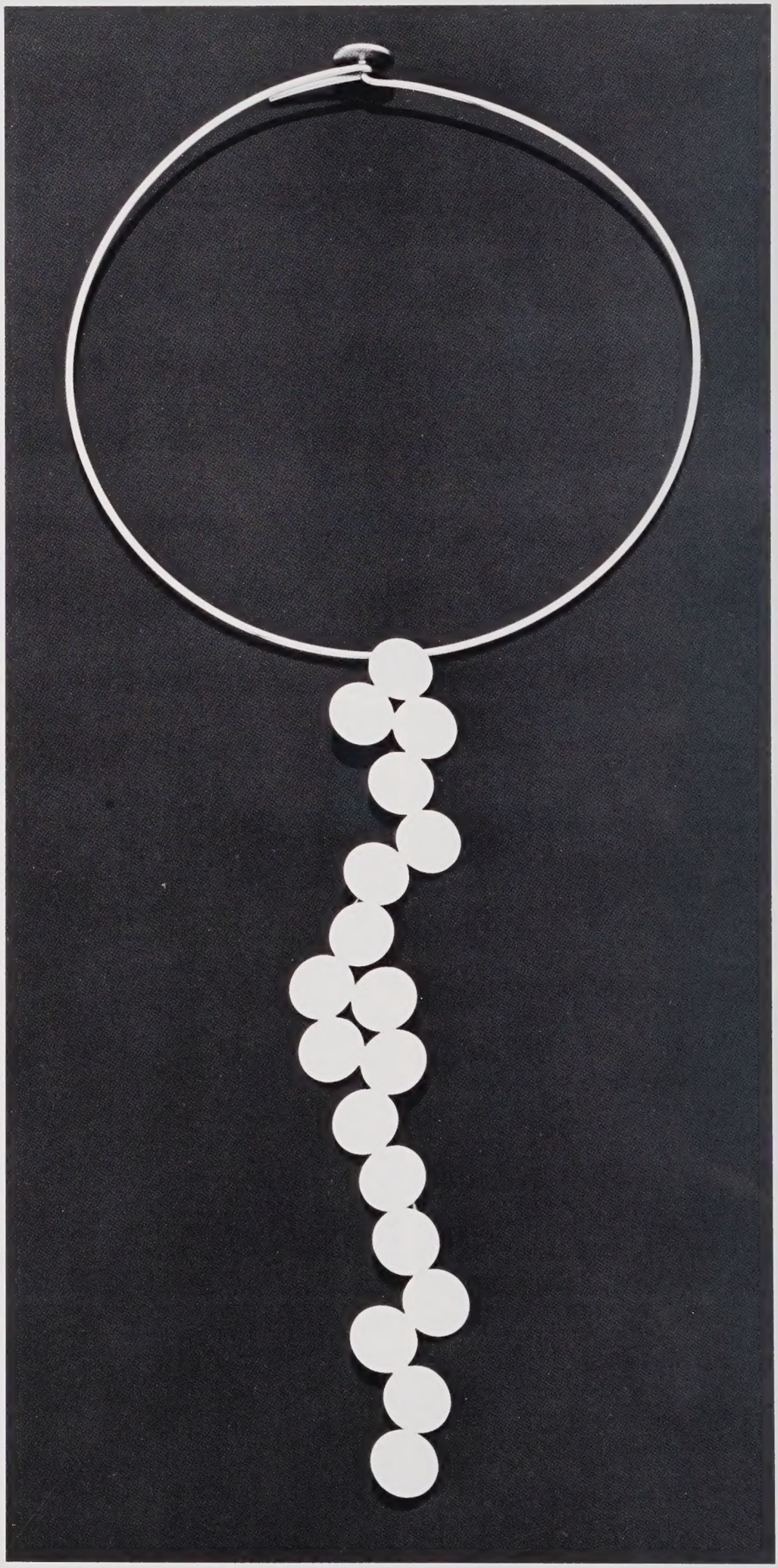
Cooke has always had a great love of nature, especially for animal, bird and floral forms. This imagery surfaces in various guises in her work from about 1950. Brooches and neckpieces from the early 1950s exhibit both increasing geometric abstraction and abstracted natural images. And, as did many of her peers in the studio jewelry movement, she concentrated on using sterling silver alone or in conjunction with wood, leather and enamel. An example of her reverence for natural materials is her incorporation of whole polished pebbles and colored natural pearls in her work of the mid-to-late 1950s. Later, there was increasing exploration into angular geometric shapes and experimentation with married metals. All of Cooke's designs are handwrought and unique; she has never engaged in any production methods, save the occasional die-stamping of circular forms.

Betty Cooke champions purity of design, nothing irrelevant or distracting. She believes that the design experience encompasses the excitement of doing something in the simplest and least complex manner. Her aim is to isolate form and help the viewer to read it clearly. Yet, she believes also that life should be full of warmth and whimsy. Her ideal home would include one stark room with only a bench and a spectacular view. "The rest of the house," she says, "should be full of personal clutter."[4] Like the prospect of that home, her jewelry is irresistable; its appeal, universal; its simplicity and charm touching us all in a place that defies words and explanations.

Notes

[1] See *Metalsmith*, vol. 6, no. 1, Winter 86
[2] See *Metalsmith*, vol. 7, no. 4, Fall 87
[3] See *Metalsmith*, vol. 3, no. 2, Spring 83
[4] From an interview with the author, September 28, 1988

Toni Lesser Wolf is a jewelry historian, lecturer, curator and writer living in New York City.



Neckpiece, silver or silver/gold, designed c. 1959

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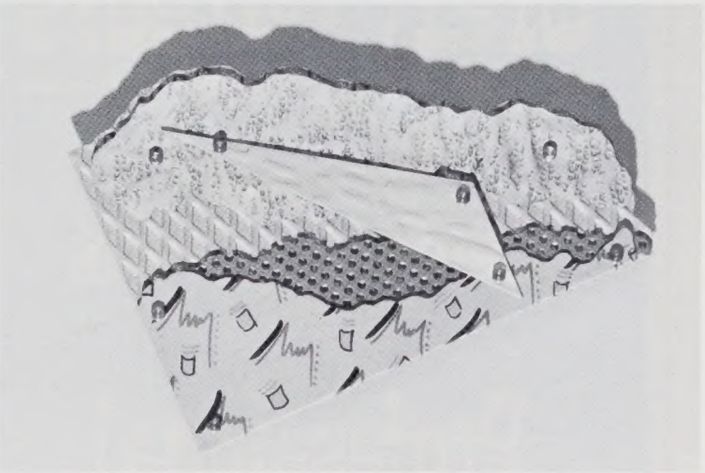

Lisa Strehl, jewelry designer, is currently teaching part time within the metalsmithing department at the Appalachian Center for Crafts. During the summer programs this year, she will teach a one-week course entitled "Jewelry in Color."

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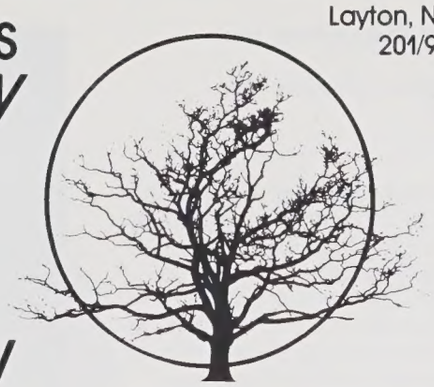

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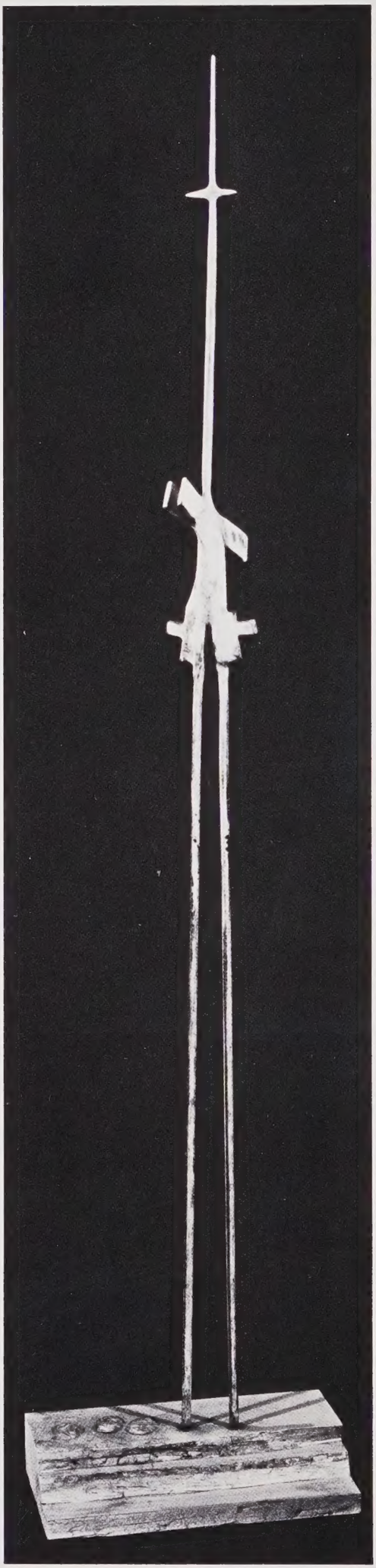
Brent Kington: Cruciforms and Crosiers
Hodges-Taylor Gallery, Charlotte, NC
September 1988
by Jan Brooks Loyd

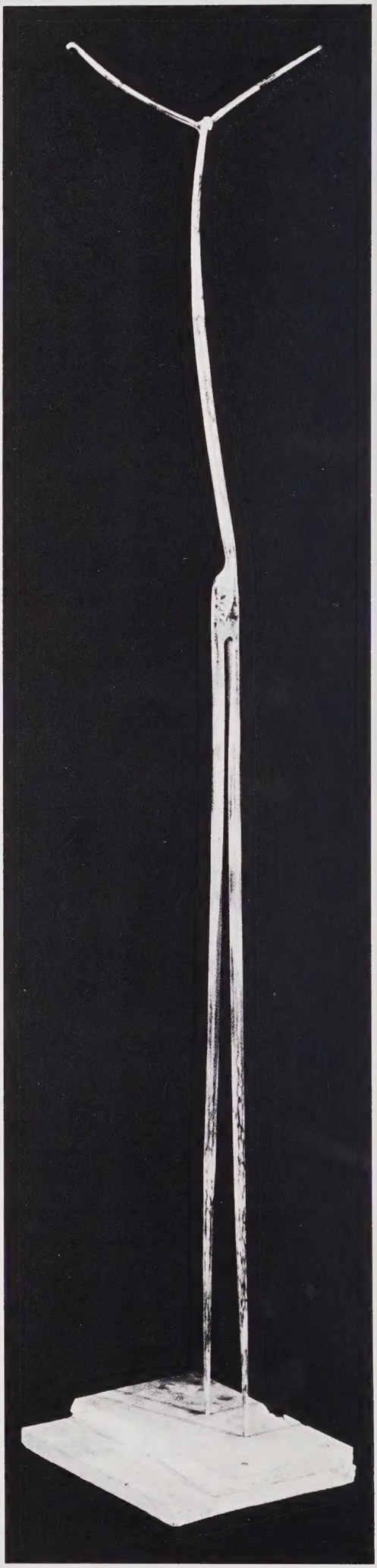
Brent Kington's vocabulary, over the years, has maintained a visual and emotional relationship with fantasy, kinetics and anthropomorphic expressions. His earlier weathervanes offered linear compositions exemplifying his inexhaustible affinity for figuration, fluid kinetic subtleties and the direct, expressive physicality of forged iron. From an interest in African body paint, Kington's figures have often simultaneously embodied refined, archaic coloration and ironic jocularity. The evolution of dense, painterly surfaces has accompanied this serial development bestowing on forms rich, archaelogical references.

During September 1988, Hodges-Taylor Gallery, Charlotte NC hosted "Cruciforms and Crosiers," a solo exhibition of nine figurative compositions from a new series of sculptures. This fresh body of work represents the filtering of more recent influences and experiences (notably, a three-month teaching/travel sojourn in Italy) and suggests a startling shift in the emotional and psychological characteristics of Kington's anthropomorphic forms.

One is instantly struck by the shift from the characteristic horizontal and kinetic function, so dominant in previous work, to a distinct vertical orientation implying expressive strategies beyond purely formal consideration. These figures no longer demand interactive forces yet are insistently dynamic via optical tactics, as the handling of color allows gestured appendages to offer complex illusions of movement within static, volumetric spaces. Upon an initial encounter, a reductive, "Giacomettian" dimension characterizes much of the work. These appendages form subtle, cruciform shapes as legs cross the pelvic element where a stele pronounces the vertical. Rectangular flags, and collage patterns often adorn the form at its hips, where the primary material volume appears. In some cases, hip sections are expressed as the flared jaws of blacksmithing tongs with reins, completing spindled legs, poised on a three-tiered base. The bases serve to further suggest ascension, figures holding promise of levitation and magical spectulation.

The more intimately scaled figures host a rich surface. Dense and seductive, these penetrating surfaces, through which the forged texture is evident, occasionally spark with patches of iconlike gold foil. However, it is the transfigurative quality of these human forms that implies an intense introspection absent in Kington's earlier work. These intricately surfaced, minimally proportioned figures cast a contemplative atmosphere, producing an aura of the sacred. These sculptural suggestions are at once reverential and emblematic of the flesh. Amidst a disordered, unstable world, the search for balance is implied in these confessional and self-critical efforts. These are, perhaps, risky implications to pursue given prevailing cynicism toward the therapeutic value of contemporary art.





Right: *Cruciform*, 53 x 11¾ x 7″, 1987; **far right:** *Cruciform*, 58 x 13 x 11″, 1988

Keith A. Lewis: Works in Metal
The Blue Moon, Rehoboth Beach, DE
September 5–October 2, 1988
by Betty Helen Longhi

In his first solo exhibition, Keith Lewis presents a series of superbly crafted pieces that address abstract concepts as well as social and even sexual issues. In his statement Lewis says, "In this culture jewelry has tended to be decorative—without stated content (except perhaps the peripheral content of ostentation). Producing jewelry which makes serious artistic statements or which seeks to prompt a jolt of recognition or reaction in the wearer is, as yet, a radical goal."

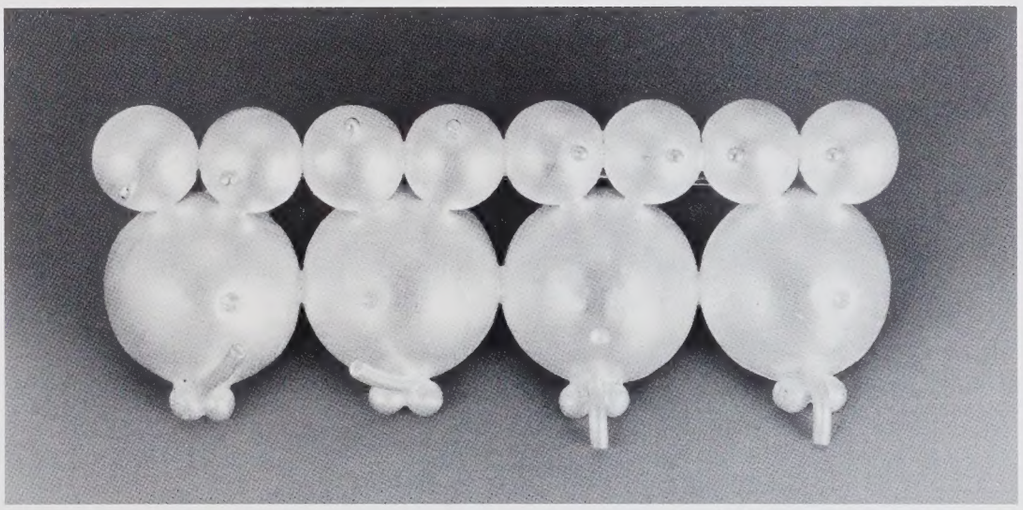
The work is divided into three categories. The first is a series of abstract brooches ranging from very simple linear designs to complex geometric studies. Most notable are the *Swedenborgian Universe* pieces, which exemplify his early exploration into the esthetics of good jewelry design. Based on the concept of an ordered, heavenly hierarchy, they are geometric progressions of concentric circles and spheres.

The second category of work deals with jewelry as a painterly medium. Using married-metals techniques, Lewis creates a group of miniature pictures. In these, the graphic elements float within a black background. They are subtle, abstract studies with a hint of deeper meaning. The pieces are "framed" as a reference to traditional two-dimensional art; but the frames are not continuous, instead they move into the design or open to allow the design to move through and beyond the frame. The imagery continues to the back so that for the wearer, the piece becomes a three-dimensional whole—part of which he can choose to share or keep private.

Lewis's most powerful statements are found in his figurative pieces, which comprise the third category. This is the work he finds most challenging—communicating in metal the inner workings of his mind. Some of his figures send messages of hostility and aggressiveness, while others gently communicate more subtle emotions including sadness, confusion or loneliness. Through these figures he addresses issues such as sexuality, social interaction and death.

Lewis has strong feelings concerning sexual issues. He has come to feel that society's traditional sexual roles are limiting, offensive and dangerous. By challenging these roles through his work he hopes also to challenge the system. In *Dancing Man with Dancing Genitals*, we first see a "cute" graphic figure and then, looking more closely, see its sexual implications. Although the naked female figure has long been considered an appropriate subject for art, male genitals, especially in jewelry, are a radical departure. As a man making jewelry, Lewis feels that exploiting purely female forms might often be sexist, while utilizing his own body form would not. *Tummy Tummy Tummy Tummy* is a statement on social and sexual interaction using both male and female imagery. The figures function at two levels, as bodies with female breasts and male genitals and as faces. The breasts become eyes and the belly buttons suggest mouths. Two figures are attracted to each other but, embarrassed by this, their eyes roll up and they try to look elsewhere. In contrast, the two additional figures observe the others in a supercilious and judgmental way, exemplifying society's posture.

Desolate Moon with Small Companions, brooch, 18k gold/sterling laminate, sterling silver, fold formed and fabricated, 3 x 1¼ x ½", 1988; **below:** *Tummy, Tummy, Tummy, Tummy*, sterling silver, fabricated, 1¼ x 3¼ x ½", 1988



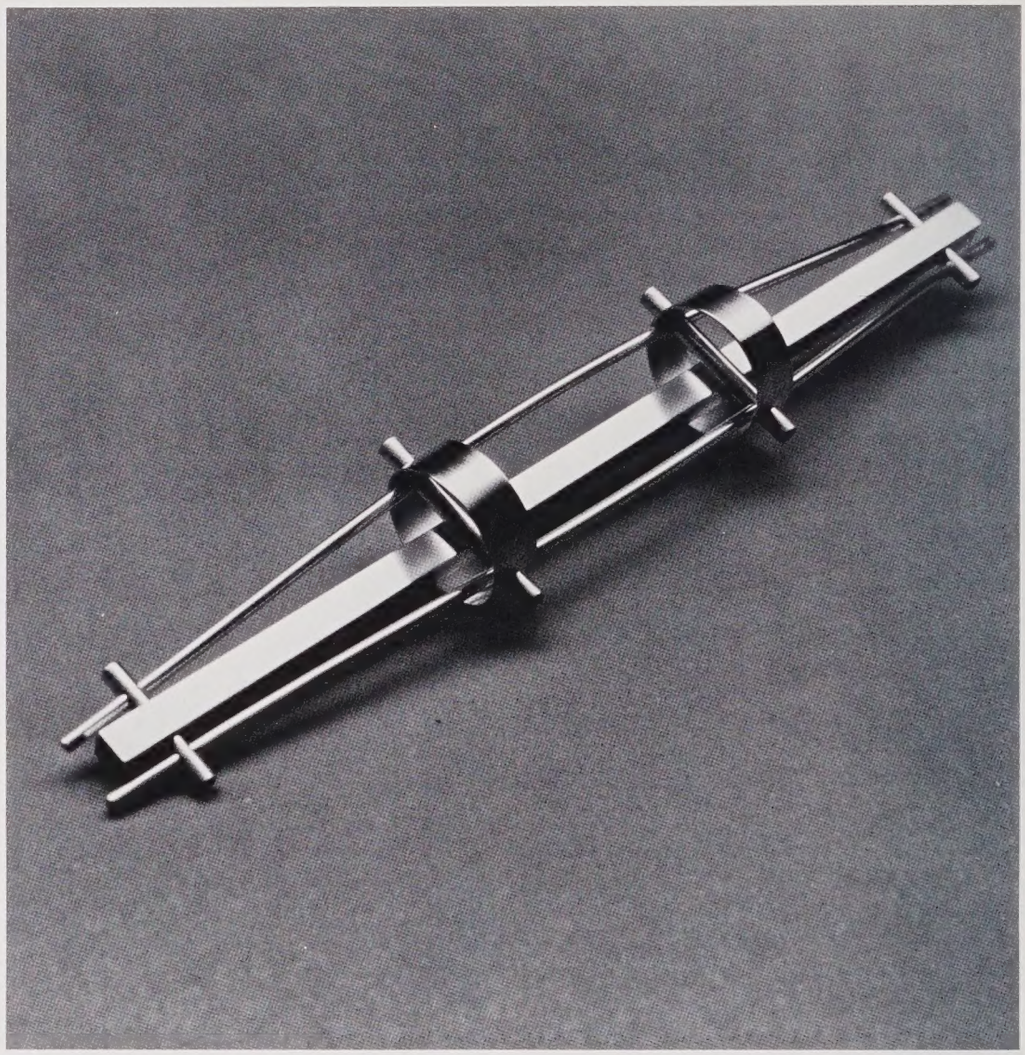
Memento Mori is Lewis's attempt to exorcise the grief he feels from his involvement with AIDS patients. With its carved bone skulls and stressed gold and silver forms, it presents a harsh and morbid image—a monument to death. A somewhat lighter message is represented in *Critter*, a small but powerful creature conveying aggressiveness and fury within the context of fantasy. In a similar mode, *Desolate Moon with Small Companions* communicates melancholy sadness and loneliness. Even with companions all around, the piece suggests we are still alone. It holds a secret surprise for the wearer in the additional companions hidden on the back, but even these are lonely—such is the human condition.

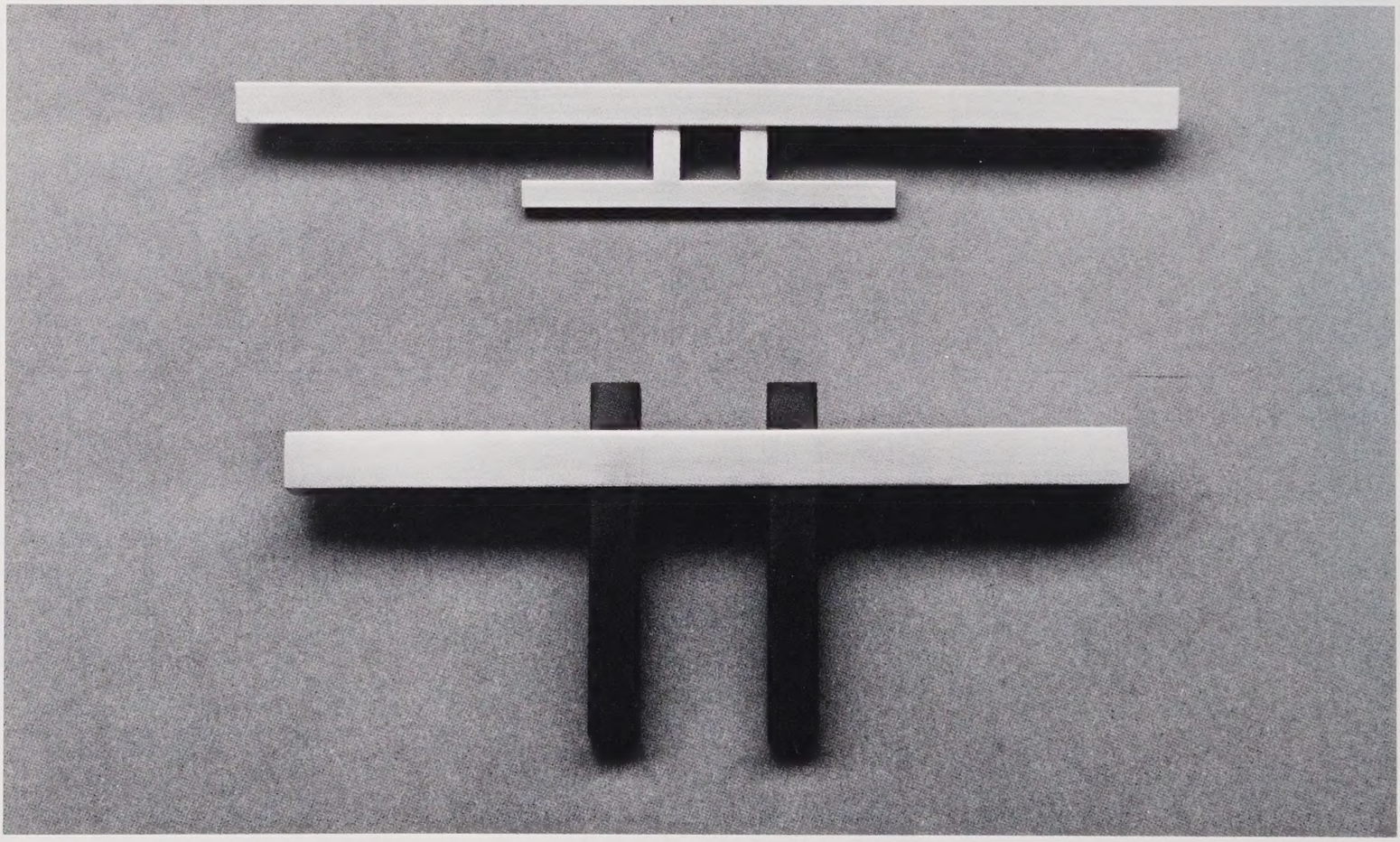
Eva Eisler
Helen Drutt Gallery, New York, NY
October 29–November 26, 1988
by Toni Lesser Wolf

Trained in Prague, Czechoslovakia, at the School of Graphic Design and the School of Building Technology and Architecture, Eisler has consistently explored structural concerns in jewelry through the use of metal, organic materials and space. In the past four years, Eisler's work has evolved from constructions comprised of sterling silver, stainless steel, along with ivory, ebony and/or slate which displayed a clearly engineered feeling, to bridgelike assemblages (made from the same materials) that explored tension. The current exhibition begins at the source by illustrating Eisler's desire to approach design from its simplest origins (as regards shape) and to progress logically along an endless formal route.

The jewelry is divided into five basic categories: brooches and earrings forged from a single, angularly bent wire (the simplest solution to creating three-dimensional, spatial enclosures out of two-dimensional line); three-dimensional bridgelike structures; tension pieces out of silver and stainless steel; "T"-formations made from silver and slate and ebony "heiroglyphs" based upon the details of the "T"-formations.

Architecturally, Eisler uses space as an integral component of each design. Whether she is fabricating gridlike structures, like those of R. Buckminster Fuller, or two-dimensional cuneiforms with associations to ancient monuments, such as Stonehenge, Eisler succeeds admirably. Her jewelry draws the viewer into an alternative consciousness, another level of being. I believe Eva Eisler's "logical journey" to be most important, and I, for one, am riding along with her for the duration.

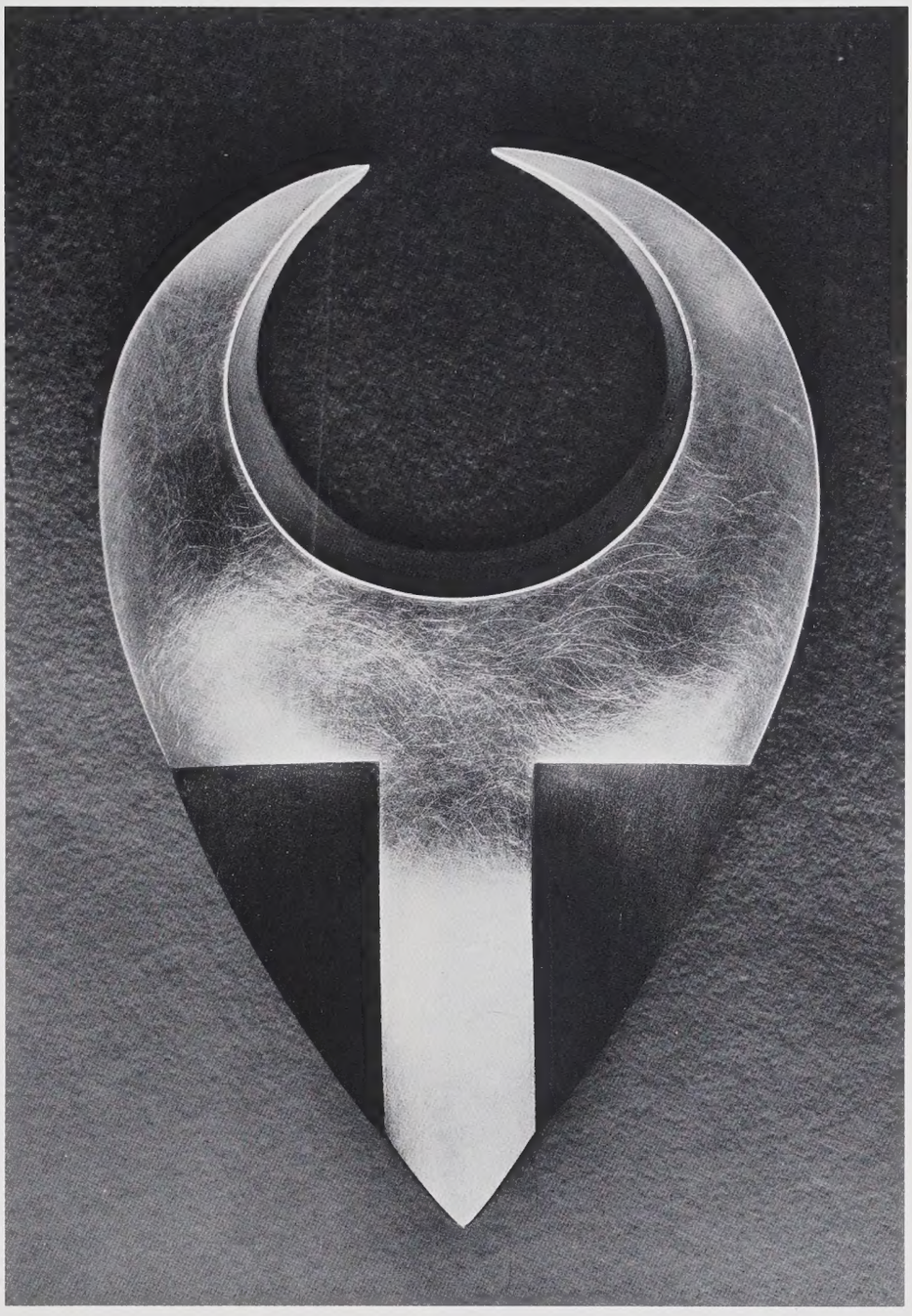




Above: *Brooch*, sterling silver, 5 x 1½″; **below:** *Brooches*, sterling silver, slate, 5½ x 2¾″ and 5¼ x 2″. Photos: Jan Frank

Didi Suydam
Susan Cummins Gallery, Mill Valley, CA
October 3–29, 1988
by Roberta Floden

Left: *Urn Ray*, brooch, sterling silver, ebony, 5 x 2 x ½", **below:** *Antelope*, brooch, sterling silver, oxydized with ebony, 4½ x 2½ x ½"



Sculpting shapes out of ebony, curly-maple and purple-heart wood (which have replaced alabaster and soapstone in her jewelry), Suydam laminates these to lightweight, hollow, silver forms. At first glance, this limited combination of materials seems stark and rather facile but, upon further examination, the materials prove themselves perfectly appropriate for Suydam's meticulously crafted, well-conceived forms. These bold, physical pieces—mainly brooches and earrings—echo both contemporary and ancient European jewelry. Suydam is inspired by "spiritually charged objects" like arches, emblems or arrows, which she then personalizes and abstracts, creating a quiet jewelry that is both traditional and contemporary.

"I see the body's potential as a landscape for sculpture," she says, "as an empty area on which to place three-dimensional objects which directly respond to their point of placement." And indeed, each piece relates to human anatomy while recalling its original inspiration.

For example, one brooch, *Stonehenge*, consists of two large angular and asymmetrical "U" shapes, the top "U" silver and the bottom purple-heart wood laminated together. Another is an elongated *Urn* made with a combination of mirror-finished, beveled silver that curves out into a crescent and angles down to a section of oxidized silver, polished to catch the light before it is laminated to an ebony tip. Also of silver and ebony, her large, magnificent *Antelope Brooch*, looks somewhat like a medieval crusader's banner. *Finned Skeet*, and *Skeet Brooch*, although their antecedent is the clay target used in trapshooting, carry allusions to Scandinavian ritual objects. Earrings take the shapes of Roman arches, flat fish and arrowheads. The one bracelet in the exhibit, *Leaf Bracelet*, is made entirely of silver and is a circle of ring-connected, overlapping leaves, which ingeniously popup when on the wrist.

Suydam's jewelry—balanced, strong and predictable—attains a stylistic refinement that does not compromise but contributes to the integrity of her art. And, because of her respect for the qualities that animate the shapes, a reverence surrounds her pieces that evokes their inner nature.

Information as Ornament
Rezac Gallery, Chicago, IL
July 8–September 14, 1988
by Lisa E. Bernfield

The theme of "Information as Ornament" was construed many different ways in this exhibit, which attempted to show how the bombardment of information contributes to society and how it influences the arts. Cindy Bernard's piece *Security Envelope: IRS*, at first glance a framed black-and-white pattern, offered very little information and stimulated only if the decoration was found to be pleasing. The pattern's role, in its original context, is to impede access to the information contained inside a business envelope. Her piece exemplified how symbols devoid of their context and removed from common usage become stripped of their meaning. With the daily bombardment of information, it is difficult to discriminate between the trivial and the profound. Content no longer adheres to its image.

Gerd Rothman's *Sammlung* is a white-lacquered wooden box that contains 100 paper-thin castings taken from palm imprints of the artist's friends. They are filed in protective slide sheets with room for future "friends." The tin imprints belong to metalsmith greats, such as Hermann Junger, and their signatures are on the back of each palm impression. The palm castings, to those who were able to read the information, revealed each individual's pasts and futures in faintly engraved lines of love, life and death. Since the information could not easily be read, and since it was not apparent that these were palm imprints because of their disengaged context, what remained was a graphic pattern. One of jewelry's roles is to adorn the body, but here the process was reversed; a part of the body was transformed into an ornamental statement. Information became ornament.

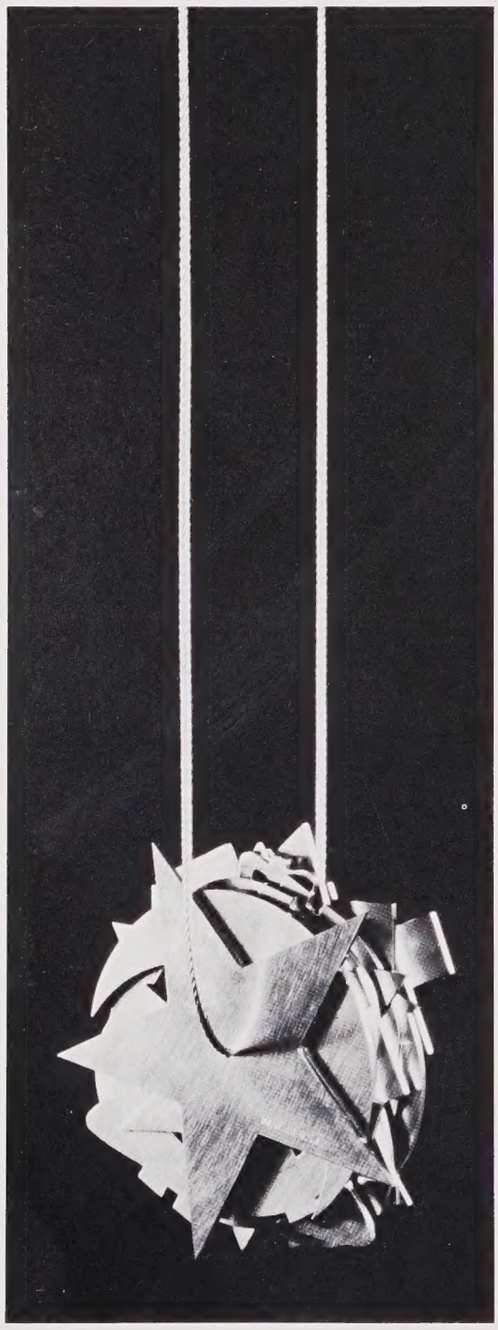
The 13 common and reconizable symbols (the star, the Liberty Bell, the cross, the dollar sign and the swastika), painstakingly hand-cut out of steel, were the components of Otto Kunzli's *Big American Neckpiece*. The work is a trenchant commentary on the artist's recent experience of living in the United States, with its overload of information. He even stamped all of the symbols with "Made in the U.S.A." to drive home his intentions. Although, at first glance, Kunzli's "jewelry" appeared to be a traditional necklace, upon close examination one realized that it was not intended to be worn. The weight is too much for the body and chain to endure. The symbols weigh the wearer down, both physically and conceptually. They appear as one strange mass of indecipherable form, a dense conglomerate of social, political and historical references.

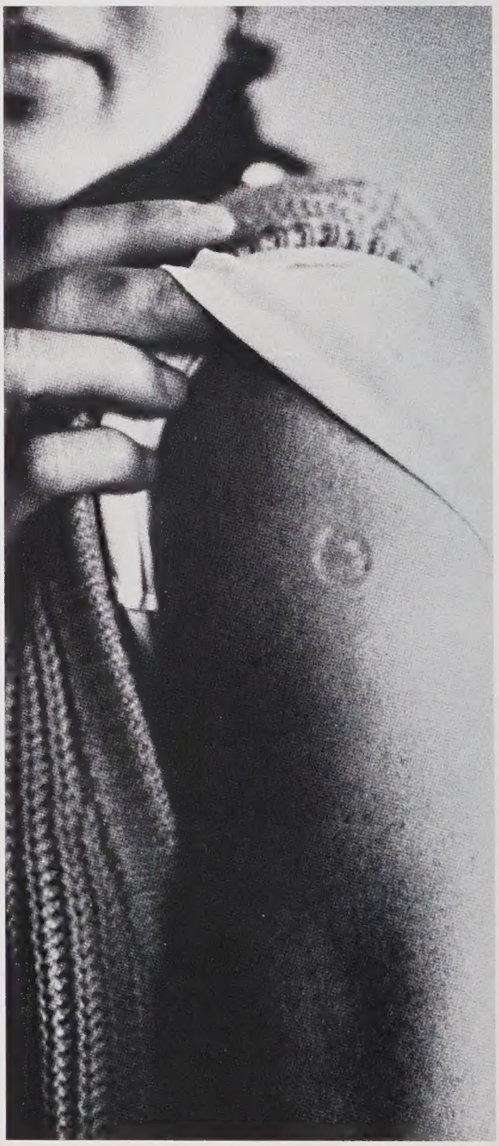
In Kevin Maginnis's *Vaccination*, a series of photographs show common people rolling up their sleeves to reveal their small pox vaccination scars. The scar symbolizes the belief in the power of science to heal, yet the work is not just informative, it can also be seen as a new approach to adornment. The scar, in this case, is the jewelry, just as Gijs Bakker's marring of the body with his "shadow and invisible jewelry" created a new format for embellishment (the imprint or indentation left by attaching a gold wire "bracelet" tightly around the arm).

Sheila Klein's *Bobbypin* looked like traditional jewelry, seeming to be decorative and wearable when viewed in a slide format, yet its scale and placement denied its place within the jewelry world. Her jewelry adorns rooms and architecture, not the body. Imagine a huge mood ring on a tower in Seattle.

This brings us to the last premise of this exhibition: to create a dialogue between fine and decorative arts. Richard Artschwager is a fine artist who uses the decorative arts as a source of inspiration. His piece *Mirror* consists of an inverted, finely detailed, grained-wood frame leading into a faded mint green plane of formica. Although there is no mirror there per se, one really felt as if the "image" glows due to the contrast of the dark wood-grained frame with the lightness of the green "image." This piece makes us believe this through its decorative signals and sensibility, not through actuality. Even though there is no image in the frame, from its ornamentation comes information.

"Information as Ornament" exhibited "craft" with "art," exemplifying that congruity of idea takes precedence over status. All of the work in the show, whether jewelry, painting or sculpture, dealt with concepts. Although this might stir up hopes that a change had occurred, that an end to the tiresome art versus craft debates is at hand, this would be deceptive, for this type of exhibit is not unusual for the European artists/craftsmen/sculptors whose work dominated.





Left: Otto Künzli, *The Big American Neckpiece*, stainless steel, engraved: "Made in USA," 13 symbols: American star, star and crescent, wheel of law, dollar sign, Liberty Bell, Star of David, heart, cross, yin-yang, anchor, swastika, tantra, hammer and sickle, 4″ d., 1986; **above:** Gerd Rothmann, *Sammlung (Collection)*, PVC, cast palms in tin, 15 x 15 x ⅛″, 1981–82; **right:** Kevin Maginnis, *Vaccination* (detail), color photographs, 9¼ x 13¾″, 1987

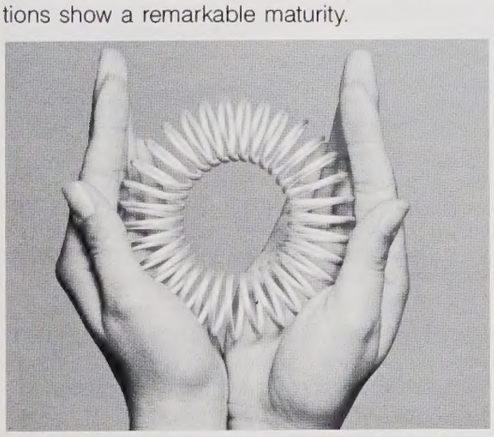
Sabine Mittermayer
Fire Works Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
September–October 1988
By Astrid Brunner

Sabine Mittermayer's 80-piece exhibit seems at first glance reticent and understated. Its dominant colors are low-key grey and gold tones; its dominant forms the tube and the spiral. In order to appreciate the emotional strength of the work, it is necessary to overcome the separation of object and subject by wearing some of the rings, earrings, and bracelets. The interaction of human body shapes and created form is essential.

Mittermayer talks about the intentional simplicity of the work in this exhibit. She sees it as expressing various paradoxical but complementary aspects of her life as, at age 25, she has come to understand it. One of the paradoxes, for instance, is the fact that she has lived and worked in two cultures. Born in Munich, and now living there again, she also came to Canada to finish high school and to learn English. She eventually became a student of Pamela Ritchie at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), winning awards both before and after graduating with a BFA in 1986.

The silver and tombac, single rings, two-finger rings, earrings and bracelets reveal a fascination with the interaction of opposites and with minimal variations on a fundamentally simple theme: the male/female relationship. In some cases, the tension is resolved partially in the work itself, while in others, resolution lies in the interaction of the human body with the object. The *Silver Tubing Rings* tend to need the body-object interaction in order to come into their own completely, while the tubing-plexiglass rings, for example, go some way to resolve the male/female paradox in the object itself. The formula on which these rings are built is that of a high-tech material (industrial silver tubing) being softened into "femininity" by another high-tech material (plexiglass).

Mittermayer talks with continental ease about the way she sees womanhood reflected in her work. Becoming a woman and growing in artistic maturity go together. Her interest does not lie in upstaging an opposite, but in integrating it creatively. She achieves a balance between male and female, premeditation and intuition, and between the intellectual overdrive of her native Germany and the emotional "lotusland" inspired by the stark beauty of Canada's Nova Scotia. The attempted resolutions show a remarkable maturity.



Tombac Spiral Bracelet, 1988; **right, top to bottom:** silver tubing two-finger ring with plexiglass flower, silver tubing single ring, silver tubing single ring with plexiglass flower, silver tubing single ring, 1988. Photos: Julian Beveridge

Young Americans 1988
American Craft Museum, New York
September 15–October 28, 1988
by Michael Dunas

The "Young Americans" exhibition, a somewhat regular event since its inception in 1950 at America House in New York, has become over the years synonymous with the American Craft Museum. It has, in a loose analogy, become for the craft community what the Whitney Biennial is to the fine art world. Through a process of jurying 98 works out of 817 submissions, the 1988 competition, like its predecessors strives for a cogent, if not sometimes contrived, portrayal of a new generation (under 30) of American craftsmen, acting as it does as a measure of emerging talent and a gauge for the cutting edge of shifting styles.

This year's show, unlike most that I can recall, paints a modish portrait of the new generation—one that reveals influence of the new wave in decorative arts. The egalitarian nature of the crafts community has always been tolerant of borrowings from other art disciplines, and the American Craft Museum/Council has in the past attempted to forge amalgams through hybrid terminology like designer-craftsman, folk-craftsman, production-craftsman and artist-craftsman. So, it is not unexpected that the deco-craftsman would someday have his/her turn in the limelight, and this show seems to indicate that the time is at hand.

But there is a problem with the deco-craftsman, as there is with other schizophrenic labels. It is not clear whether the new generation wants their work to be considered decorative or just decorated; whether their objects are meant to complement an interior style or fashion of dress; or whether their objects are embellished with motifs that are meant to complement the personality of the object itself. This is not a new issue. Craftsmen regularly have tried to point out the difference between the painted pot or the ornamental brooch and a craft object that acts as a decorative accessory or appointment, just as painters have addressed the patterned surface in an effort to make the distinction clear. The danger of this ambiguity lies in the potential for exploitative publicity, for individual objects to be assessed only by their conformity to an all-consuming esthetic costume with which to adorn a public image.

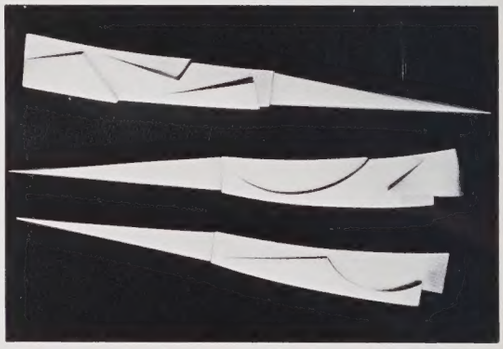
By and large, the works in the show appear to be "decorated" predominantly by surface patterning, compositional pastiche and theatricality. Most of the metalsmiths and jewelers in the show: Catherine Butler, Claire Dinsmore, Sandra Enterline, Mary Hughes, Robert Laible, Christina De Paul, Laura Malecki, Tony Papp, David Peterson, Claire Sanford, Sandra Sherman, Alissa Warshaw have shared of these characteristics, often utilizing anodized aluminum, titanium, bronze and copper patinas that have become the surface techniques emblematic of the 1980s.

However, a shadow hangs over the show, one that seems to inhibit the free play and experimentation of the traditional decorated craft object. There appears to be a certain control exerted by the craftsman to conform to an overall look associated with the post modern style, particularly Memphis, that has arrived on the scene to rejuvenate the decorative arts. Beneath the histrionics of many of these pieces, there is a sentimental appropriation at work characteristic of the new decorative arts.

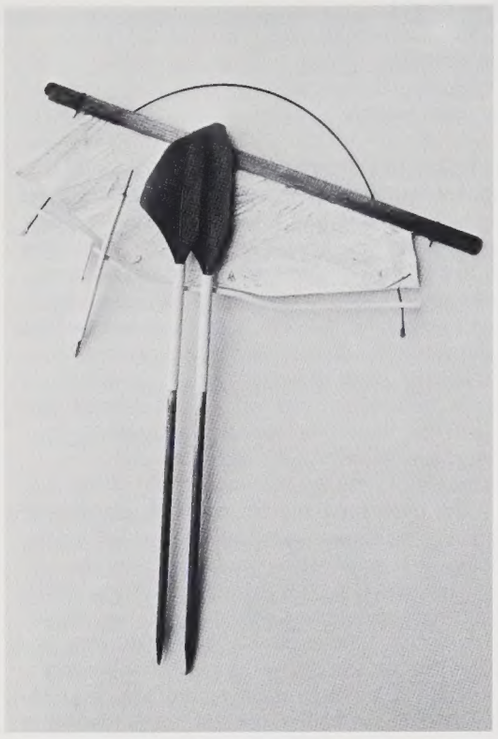
Sometimes it is the neoclassic; other times it is Pop or Art Deco that takes over as a facile signifier of the past, luring us through familiarity. What is egregious about this "decorative arts" approach is the lack of depth in the work — the image is all there is; the experimentation with decorated forms becomes merely a saccharine exercise of packaging the viewer's response.

Possibly it was the Museum's attempts at packaging that caused only those craftsmen who fit its vision to submit slides; possibly the choice of jurors was too restrictive esthetically; or possibly this is truly the undercurrent of the young generation, and the 800 entrants (down from 11,000 in the late 70s) provided a mandate for this move toward a decorative sensibility.

Ironically, the three award winners—one each in fiber, glass and metal (Lisa Norton in metal)—went against the grain of the show's noticeable homogeneity. Their work was decidedly abstract, conceptual, minimal, sacrificing surface in the service of form, inconsistent with the prevailing post-modernist style. Maybe the jurors wanted to award these craftsmen as a relief from the tedious conformity of the pack, or, maybe, as their statement indicated, they did it to convey their suspicion that the diversity of work they knew was being done around the country was not represented by the submissions. In any case, while "Young Americans" is not the be all and end all of the avant garde in crafts—the selection process alone is flawed enough to give us pause—it remains a dependable showcase, raising questions about direction and identity that are an insistent part of any discussion about crafts.



Above: Tony Papp, *Three Letter Openers*, sterling silver, nickel, 8 x 2 x ½". Photo: George Erml, courtesy: American Craft Museum; **top:** Lisa Norton, *Useful Project with Sentimental Appeal*, bronze, sheet-metal fabrication, 17 x 19 x 12", 1987



Left: Lia de Sain, *Bodyswing*, spring steel, cotton, acrylic paint, 75 x 30 cm; **above:** Richard Walraven, *Necklace*, corroded tin, 1988; **top:** Charon Kransen, *Hairpin*, mixed media, 1988

New Dutch Visions in Wearable Sculpture
Joanne Rapp Gallery, The Hand and the Spirit, Scottsdale, AZ
December 1–31, 1988
by Lynn R. Rigberg

As the show's title suggests, this assemblage of contemporary jewelry has a double theme. The exhibit has both crossed the Atlantic from The Netherlands and traversed an esthetic isthmus that separates jewelry conceived as art from art conceived as jewelry. Collectively, these works reinvest jewelry with its original meanings, including personalization and risktaking as well as adornment. Charon Kransen, curator of the show, reflects that the designs signal a reaction to traditional Dutch strictures, emanating from a culture where the concentrated population of 15 million must regiment life.

In their first reactionary step in the 1960s, the Dutch designers began to use nontraditional materials like aluminum, rubber and brass, meanwhile keeping to elementary techniques and "minimal usage for maximum effect." Today the movement maintains both its discipline of design and its challenge to the precept that the highest inherent value in jewelry is in the value of the materials over art, philosophy and individuation. The show includes collars of anodized aluminum or wood; bracelets of cleverly connected laminated foil candy wrapper squares; painted wooden shapes that attach and adorn uniquely; plus pieces created of rubberbands, corroded tin, plexiglass, cork and fabric-sheathed steel. There is silver and gold, but in unembarrassed apposition with less costly copper and tin.

What these and the other pieces have in common is their combination of qualities of freedom from traditional constraints and sound discipline of accomplished craft. The unifying idea behind them is to stretch established limits rather than to revolt against esthetics and form. Many of the designers represented in the show have come from other areas of design to jewelry. Kransen attests that, in Holland, "people are coming now from other places to think about the human body, and about jewelry and its meaning."

An altered sense of self in space results from wearing the thin, bent, oversized, dimensional necklaces of cotton-wrapped steel by Lia De Sain. Rian De Jong's wooden shoulderstands also break through traditional perceptions of adornment, redefining the human form and the architectonics relating to it. There is romance in the delicate three-dimensional necklaces of spirals elaborated in tin, gold or silver, and looped together in arabesques by Coen Mulder. Humor underlies paper bracelets and necklaces by Beppe Kessler. Their synergistic charm is enhanced by the materials used (*Playboy* and *The Financial Times*).

The process in the works extends to the wearer, but the pieces also can be appreciated on display. Richard Walraven's corroded tin designs, developed in typically methodical Dutch fashion out of flat circles, are segmented and folded back to create strong, monumental pieces wherever they rest or hang. Charon Kransen's graceful pins and hair accessories combine paint, canvas and metal and can be set out in three-dimensional exhibit. Overall, the Dutch jewelry demonstrates how the line between form and function can blur, with art emerging as the prevailing connotation.

This exhibit will travel to J. Cotter Gallery, Vail, CO (Jan. 1989); Bellevue Art Museum, Bellevue, WA (Feb. 1989); Anne Reed Gallery, Ketchum, ID (Mar. 1989); Concepts Gallery, Carmel, CA (April 1989).

Jan Craft
Gaston County Museum of Art and History, Dallas NC
October 1–December 31, 1988
by Jane Kessler

Jan Craft has pared her visual vocabulary down to a triumvirate of powerful elements; the circle, the triangle and a single axial line. The circle alone assures a certain depth and stability in the work for, as Carl Jung noted, the circle is the most powerful cross-cultural archetypal symbol; one which represents wholeness, completeness, source and end. For Craft, it provides a base to work from. "Its simplicity lends itself to be used freely without being intrusive on other images contained within. The circle," says Craft, "is symbolic of nature because of her constant cycles and processes."

Craft often pairs the circle with an equilateral triangle, a shape also symbolic of stability and power. It functioned as the compositional superstructure in Renaissance paintings and often represents the spiritual trinity. The single axial line frequently serves as horizon line, strengthening Craft's reference to nature and landscape. It is the critical element in creating the delicate and asymmetrical compositional balance that is a hallmark of her work. With this simple vocabulary, Craft describes for us the limitless variation that may be found within a self-imposed and finite limitation.

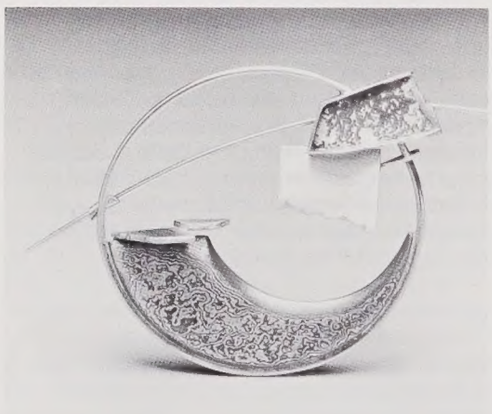
The 20 pieces in this exhibition, ranging from earrings to human-scale sculpture, share with one another a manifest sense of assuredness, a near complacency that derives from Craft's adherence to such a stable compositional bent. What appears limitless, however, is Jan Craft's technical skill and an imagination that is set loose in materials and technique rather than in composition. There is grand variety in the surfaces, textures and materials that she applies to the solid and unvarying shapes.

Craft attributes her technical know-how to her instruction at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, under the skilled guidance of such masters as Brent Kington, Richard Mawdsley and Darryl Meier. The metals department at S.I.U. is renowned internationally for instruction in the formation and use of Japanese alloys and Damascus (pattern-welded) steel. Kuromido (copper and arsenic), Shakudo (copper and 24k gold) and Shibuichi (copper and silver) are Japanese alloys that Craft uses in combination with other metals in many of the pieces in this exhibition. She also employs Damascus steel in her work, adding yet another strong visual design element.

Among the most successful pieces in the show are two brooches, *Landscape Series #5* and *Magnificent Perfection*, which use Damascus steel to suggest earth, sky or water. Gold in 14k, 18k and 24k is used as bright contrast to the patterned steel. Though many of the pieces in the exhibition are wearable, the functional elements are aptly disguised and function is clearly subjugated to form. Small sculptures, such as the pieces in the *Arch Series* are comparable in scale to jewelry but eschew function altogether. The arch, a form that derives from both circle and triangle, becomes a freestanding playground for Craft's technical skills.

Two larger pieces in the exhibition *Bondoukou Disc* and *Arch #6* are simply small pieces magnified. Few changes occur, either in feeling or in compositional relationships. These works, though larger and perhaps more powerful due to their increased size, are still as delicate and meticulously crafted as their smaller counterparts.

Jan Craft presents a body of work that is both cohesive and varied. It is clean, confidently resolved, elegant and simple.



CREDITS:

Jane Kessler is a freelance curator and writer and founder of Curators' Forum in Charlotte, NC.

Jan Loyd is an arts administrator living in Newell, NC.

Lisa Bernfield is a jeweler living in Chicago.

Roberta Floden is a writer living in San Anselmo, CA.

Astrid Brunner is an artist and writer living in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

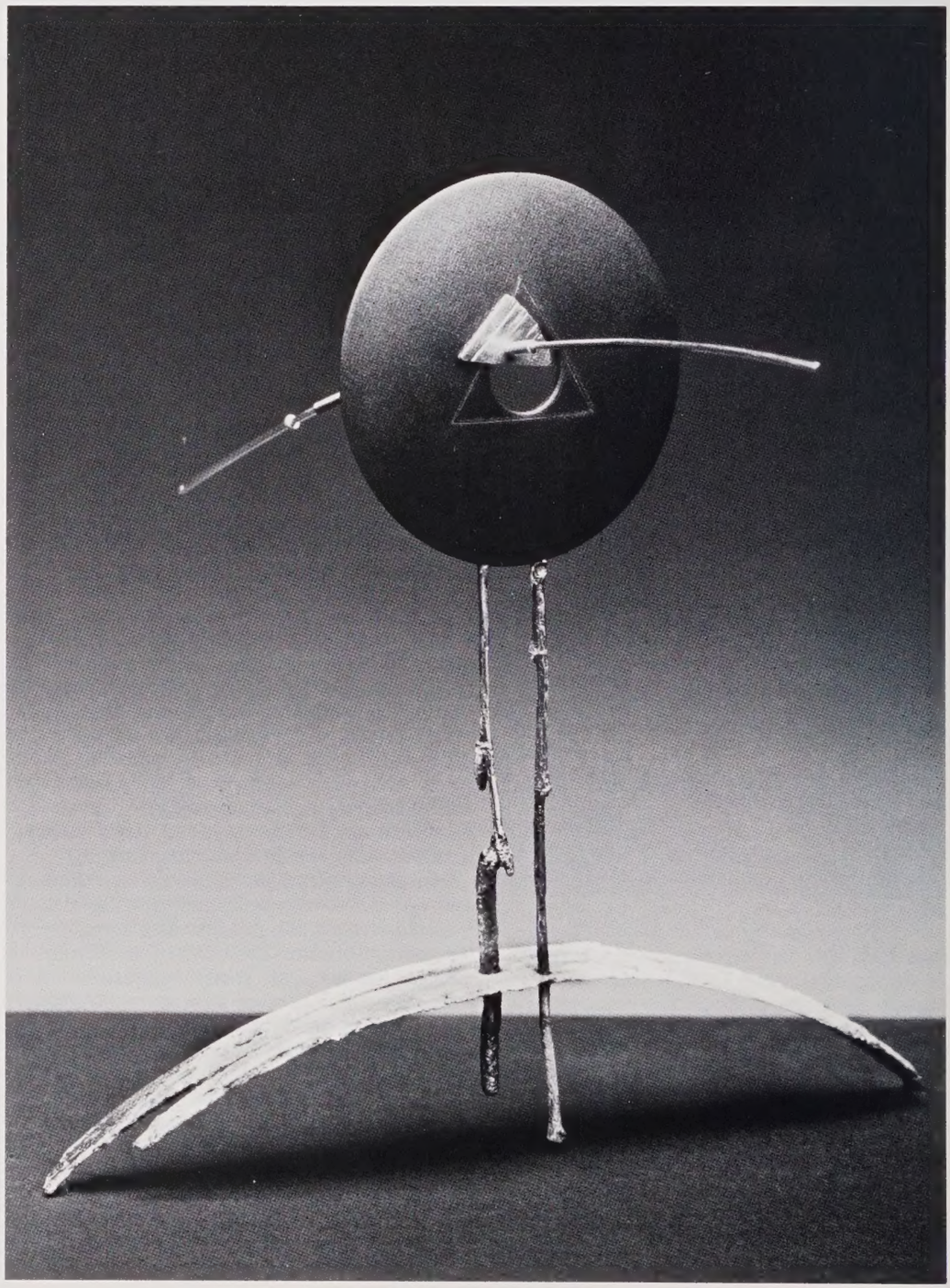
Michael Dunas is a writer in the fields of craft and design and lecturer at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia.

Betty Helen Longhi is a metalsmith living in Seaford, DE.

Toni Lesser Wolf is a jewelry historian, lecturer, curator and writer living in New York City.

Lynn Rigberg writes on the arts from Phoenix, AZ.

Below: *Bondoukou Disc*, steel, 24k gold, cast sterling silver, cast bronze, paint, 6 x 4½ x 2″; **below left:** *Magnificent Perfection* brooch, Damascus steel, 14, 18 and 24k gold, 2⅛ x 2⅛ x ¼″. Photo: David Ramsey



LETTERS

Dear Editor:
David Peterson's article "The Art of the Celtic Metalsmith" in the Fall 1988 issue was an example of the kind of writing I don't see enough of in *Metalsmith*. Stimulating, informative and authoritative on a basis not of annotation but original research, it filled a long-standing gap in my storehouse of knowledge. But it raised a question. Is the Snettisham torc rigid? Quoting from the article, "The torc is best described as a neck-ring, typically rigid . . ." I had been convinced of the "cable-type" torcs' flexibility since 1978, when I was commissioned to make a copy of the Snettisham Torc, in sterling, by a client who had become fascinated by the Druidic religion.

Having only a picture to go on, we decided that the number of wires in the "cable" (not twist) had to be the Druids' magic number 7. The terminals looked chased, but, as the budget was $500, we settled on simple, hollow spheres. I started twisting wire. Kinky business, that; I soon learned that seven wires, when twisted, always assume a configuration of six, wrapping themselves around the seventh, which assumes the core position. However, as the twisting force is distributed differently to the core than the wrap wires, I thought a cabling die would be useful to prevent the spaghetti from bunching. So, I drilled seven holes into a piece of .25" steel, tapering and polishing both ends of each hole. I threaded the die with 16-gauge wire, soldered the ends together, chucked them in a low-speed drill and, walking slowly backwards from the vise-held, well-lubricated die, twisted my first "cable." I put the word in quotes because I still thought I was twisting wire. The distinction is more than academic because of the strange behavior of cable. The stuff is really flexible!

Cable jewelry is now much in vogue, and from conversations with Peter Roth, who has made more of it than anyone, I gathered that commercial cable manufacturers wrap the wires around a core with sets of movable dies, the core later being withdrawn, because, I think, in subsequent use, the central wire, not being coiled, would work-harden, fatigue and soon break. Much of this I induced from my experiments and was soon able to produce seven 15" pieces of kink-free seven-strand cable. When twisted into its final shape and assembled, the torc was marvelously flexible, permitting the terminals to be stretched out twice as far as necessary to put it on, without any distortion, and was worn daily by its owner for two years, after which I lost track of him. What a vindication, I thought, of ancient technology! I had always assumed these torcs to be stiff as bricks. So, what happened? Did I do something wrong; is the number 7 really magic, or is the Snettisham Torc flexible?
—**Falk T. Burger**

David Peterson replies:
Yes, the Snettisham Torc is more flexible than dual-strand torcs — the same way that a multistrand electrical wire is more flexible than a sold single strand of wire. As a description of the form, it is still considered rigid. All the torcs described, however, can be easily sprung open to be put on and removed.

Dear Editor:
This letter is in reference to Stanley Lechtzin's lecture on CAD/CAM at the Society of North American Goldsmith's conference in Saratoga Springs last June. In my opinion, CAD/CAM is a wonderfully liberating process, as was the invention of sandpaper. (An interesting anecdote: I've heard that tape was invented only recently as a result of the auto industry's desire to do quality pinstriping and detailing.) In today's marketplace, students must learn how to use a computer if they wish to be competitive. However, teaching a metalsmith to use a CAD/CAM, but not a file or pencil is a deficient education.

I'm 35 years old and my experience has shown me that the more tools and processes I become familiar with, the less my designs are restricted by the limits of my technical abilities. As far as I'm concerned, one can never know too much about tools, processes and materials. Each offers its own unique sensual and spiritual satisfaction. It's not a question of whether one tool will replace another, or if a piece fabricated by hand is more valid than one done on CAD/CAM; the bottom line is the artist's commitment, integrity and vision.
—**Carl Tese**

Dear Editor:
The disbelief and sadness of the tragedy of Joke Van Ommen's death has touched me deeply and I rage at the injustice of losing a person of such high integrity. Although our relationship began as that of colleague and gallery owner, the more I got to know Joke, the more I appreciated her as a kindred in spirit; in supporting her I felt I was supporting myself, without being asked to compromise. She had my greatest respect for her commitment to represent fine art in the jewelry medium, both here and abroad, and to be true to that commitment even at the expense of her own work and personal financial needs.

Her subtle, yet firm style, flavored with her unique elegance and grace, won enormous respect for the community of American art jewelers, not only in Washington but also in Europe, which, until her intercession, had remained largely disinterested.

Joke precipitated the appearance of articles on American jewelers in European magazines and the initiation of exchange exhibitions, such as the recent "American Figurative Jewelry" at V&V Galerie in Vienna, in which I participated with Catherine Butler, Bruce Metcalf, Stuart Wilson. This followed an exhibition of "Viennese Figurative Work" at VO Galerie. I know that Joke had plans to continue to expand this valuable interchange.

While her role as gallery owner inevitably depleted some of her own studio time, being an artist enhanced her sensitivity to those she represented. I was particularly struck both by her ability to appreciate people's gifts and by her remarkable humility. Joke did not feel it was appropriate to give herself a show in her own gallery until the work has been juried by colleagues she respected.

I am grateful I had the good fortune of being touched by Joke's life. The bittersweetness of death is that it can be our teacher, a sharp reminder to appreciate our daily life and those in it. For myself, the most positive way I believe I can accept the loss of this supportive colleague, mentor and truly beautiful human spirit, is to honor her vision by keeping it alive as a daily inspiration.
—**Enid Kaplan**

Dear Editor:
I had always imagined that my first contribution to an artistic publication would take place when I had established myself in my career as a jewelry designer. However, I am moved today to write about the loss of a dear friend, a mentor, a role model and a true giant in the jewelry field, Joke Van Ommen.

Our relationship commenced with my acceptance of a part-time position at the VO Galerie in Washington, D.C. There I was encouraged to become familiar both with Joke's work and her knowledge of the field. I also had the opportunity to study the wonderful panorama of contemporary European and American jewelry on display at the gallery. Perhaps most intriguing was Joke's immeasurable insight into the artists themselves.

When I first met her, she attempted to allay my fears of not being able to support myself as an artist. It was only after being at the gallery for a while, however, observing her love for her work and hearing about the various artists with whom she associated that I realized how much I wanted to become a part of this world, regardless of the financial pitfalls.

I worked at the gallery for a number of months and then moved to New York City, where I began assisting three jewelry designers. I stayed in touch with Joke, occasionally calling to ask advice and find out what big projects she was working on at the time.

In early September of 1988, she called and asked me to work with her at the Chicago New Art Forms Expo. I sensed immediately that it would be an excellent opportunity. I also hoped that I might be able to "pay back" some of the debt I owed her.

It was during the eight days we spent together in Chicago that I came to know Joke as a friend. The exposure I received to other artists through this experience and Joke's continued words of wisdom during our trip were invaluable to me. I will, however, treasure the building of a friendship between us most of all.

For me, then, Joke's death is painful in a number of ways. My life has certainly been enriched by having known her, and I only hope that this letter can begin to indicate how she touched many people in many ways, even an aspiring artist just starting out.
—**Jamie Rawding**

IN MEMORIAM

Richard C. Thomas, 1917–1988

Tradition and innovation, discipline and dedication, craftsmanship and concern, these were just a few of the concepts that Richard Thomas successfully blended to become, as his nomination for inclusion in the Archives of American Art stated in 1973, ". . .the nation's foremost Silversmith and Metalsmithing teacher." Thomas, who suffered from heart disease, died in his sleep at his home in Ypsilanti, Michigan November 21.

Born in Marion Center, Pennsylvania, Thomas spent his formative years on the family farm, a time about which he frequently reminisced. He attended Indiana University earning his degree and teaching certificate in 1940. A brief tenure in the public schools preceded his entry into the Armed Forces in 1941, where he served as an Army cavalryman until 1946, and which was another source for the many stories and anecdotes that were so much a part of his personality and that so many of his former students and friends will recall. In 1946, Thomas was accepted into Cranbrook Academy of Art, where he earned an M.F.A. in painting in 1948 under Zoltan Sepeshy. During this same period he established himself as a successful and knowledgeable metalsmith and he was rewarded by being named Instructor of Metalsmithing and Head of Department at Cranbrook in 1948. He remained in that position for the next 36 years, earning the consummate respect and admiration of students, peers and contemporaries.

As a silversmith, Thomas was prolific. He was particularly interested in liturgical design and executed over 300 objects, ranging from pectoral crosses to complete chancel groups. Exhaustively researched and meticulously crafted, his work graces the surroundings of many churches throughout the country. He was frequently called upon to speak at liturgical conferences and served as a consultant on liturgical design for a Detroit area architectural firm. The Cranbrook mace and silver punch bowl, both used on high occasions such as commencement, are two pieces designed and executed by Thomas. Although his personal interest in liturgical silversmithing influenced some students, it was never a barrier to innovative thought or creativity.

As a teacher, Thomas emphasized a respect for traditional practices and tools plus an understanding of basic processes. However, once these were mastered, innovation became the key word. Innovative tools, innovative techniques and innovative form were encouraged and commonplace in the metalsmithing studio throughout Thomas's tenure at Cranbrook. The Cranbrook metalsmithing theses and the successes of his students are a lasting testimony to this fact. In addition to stressing a basic understanding of the nature of metal and the fundamentals of design, Thomas also relied heavily on individual initiative and the interaction between students to round out his philosophy of education. The faith he held in a student's capability rarely failed him. Many of his former students are widely recognized as current leaders in the field of metalsmithing, and of these many also hold positions of rank and stature in universities and colleges around the country.

In his years at Cranbrook, Thomas served in many different capacities, each held concurrent with his position as Head of the Metalsmithing Department. This included his being the unofficial Cranbrook historian. He possessed a wealth of information about the history of Cranbrook, and, having been the last faculty member to work under Eliel Saarinen, he was frequently called upon to relate his impressions of those early years. His quiet and articulate delivery, laced with wit and sensitivity, was always captivating and he rarely lost an audience. He was also, at one time or another, Interim Head of the Design Department, Dean of Students, Registrar, Administrative Assistant to the President and Vice President of Academic Affairs. In addition, Thomas authored two definitive works on metalsmithing, *Metalsmithing for the Artist/Craftsman* and *Metalraising—A Course of Study.*

Tribute was paid to Thomas by the establishment of a scholarship fund in his name at Cranbrook. Summarizing the memorial service held December 11, 1988, at Christ Church Cranbrook and the thoughts expressed by the speakers, Roy Slade, President of Cranbrook Academy of Art, remarked that Richard Thomas was indeed an inspiration to all who knew him, truly the "Dean of Metalsmiths. . . . Metalsmith, Teacher, and Gentle. . man."

—Norman Thomas
M.F.A., Cranbrook Academy of Art, 1970

Velma Davis Dozier, 1901–1988

Velma Dozier is best known for her silver and especially gold jewelry. Greatly influenced by Alexander Calder, many of her pieces are kinetic, with various parts that move when worn. Dozier is also well known for the wide variety of exotic materials she incorporated into her work such as Mexican obsidian, bird skins and ancient burial beads. Through her teaching, Dozier and her work greatly influenced many metalsmiths in the Dallas area between 1935 and 1965.

Born near Waco, Texas, Velma Dozier came to Dallas in 1920 to study painting with Vivian Aunspaugh and later at Southern Methodist University. In 1931 she received a B.S. in painting from Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas. The following year she completed an M.A. at Columbia.

While studying painting at Columbia, Dozier was introduced to metalsmithing and jewelry design. Upon her return to Dallas in 1933, she cofounded the Dallas School of Creative Arts with fellow metalsmith Esther Webb Houseman. In 1940 Velma Davis married the painter Otis Dozier and moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado, where she became an assistant to potter Eric Helman. In 1945 the Doziers returned to Dallas where she continued her metalworking.

Dozier assisted in the organization of the Craft Guild of Dallas in 1949, for which she later taught. During the 1950s and 1960s, she exhibited in numerous state and national institutions, including the Museum of Contemporary Crafts, New York; Minnesota Museum of Art, St. Paul; Everhart Museum, Scranton, Pennsylvania; and the Wichita Art Association. Her work was included regularly in the annual Texas Crafts exhibitions held at the Dallas Museum of Art from 1948 through the early 1970s. In 1974 she and her husband were the focus of an exhibition and catalog entitled "A Salute to the Doziers of Dallas" (Dallas Museum of Art). Currently her work can be seen in *The Eloquent Object* (Philbrook Art Museum, 1987). The largest repository for her work is the Dallas Museum of Art, which owns over two-dozen pieces by her, as well as those of her associates and students.

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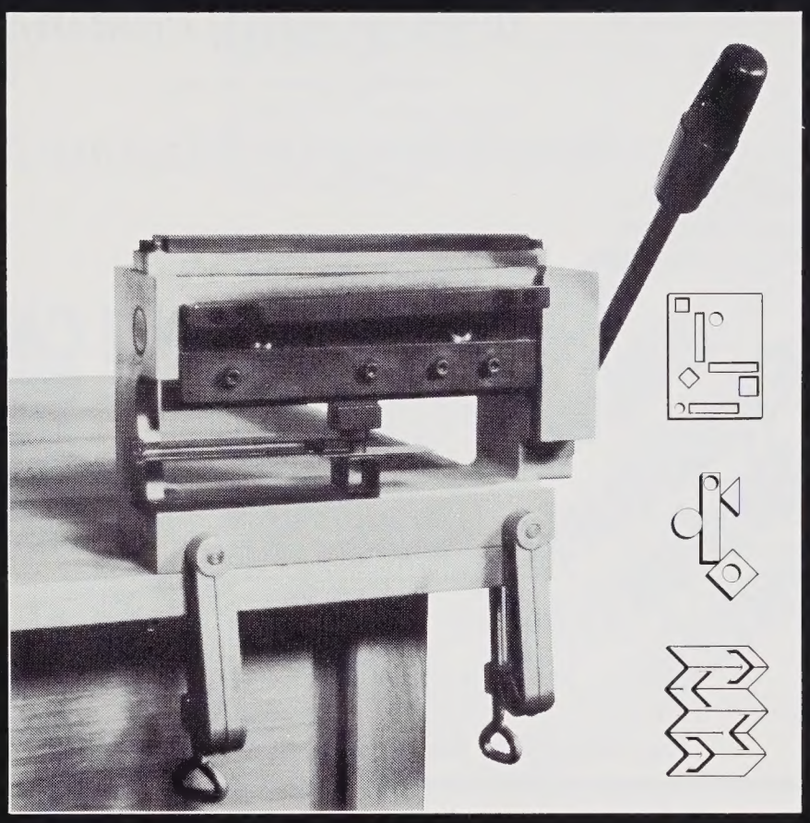

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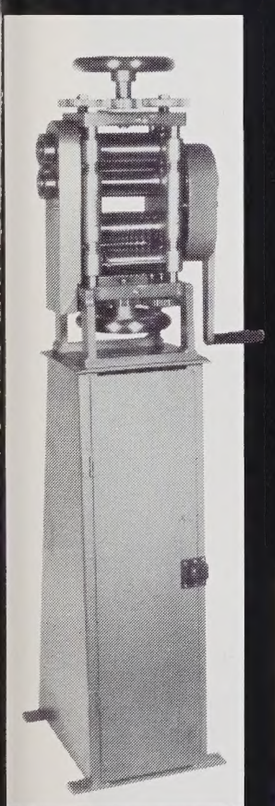

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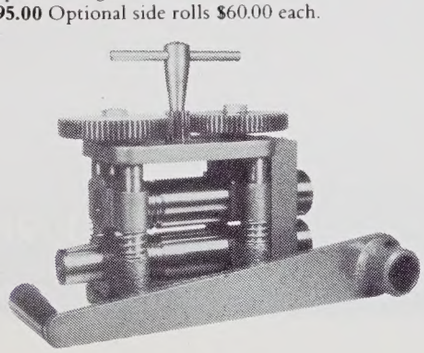

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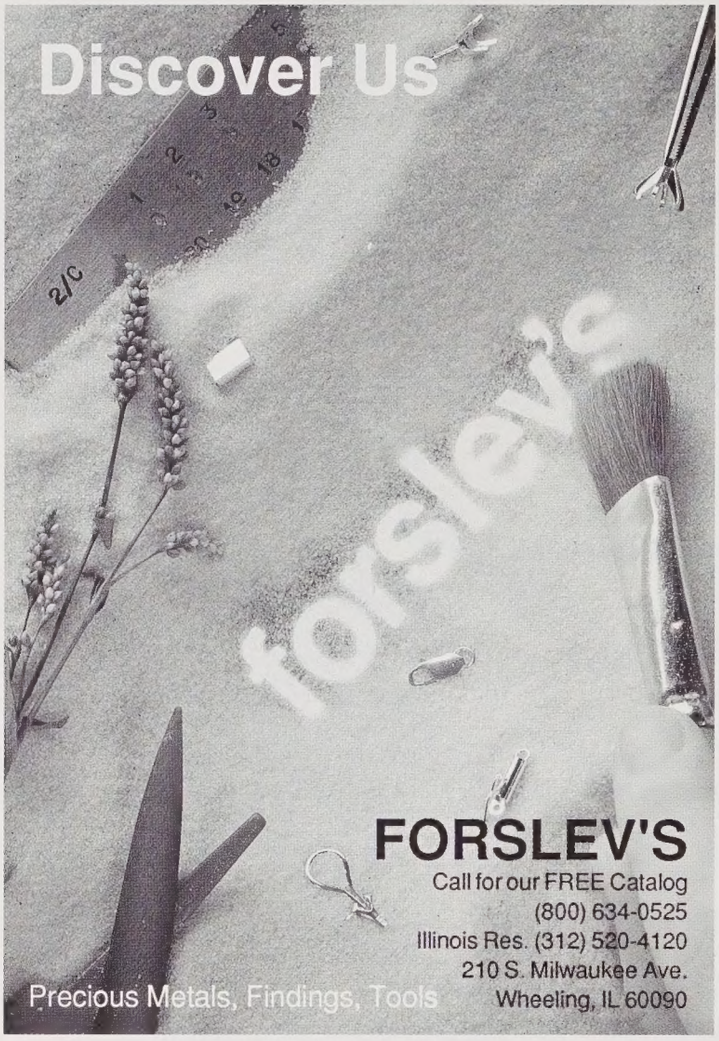

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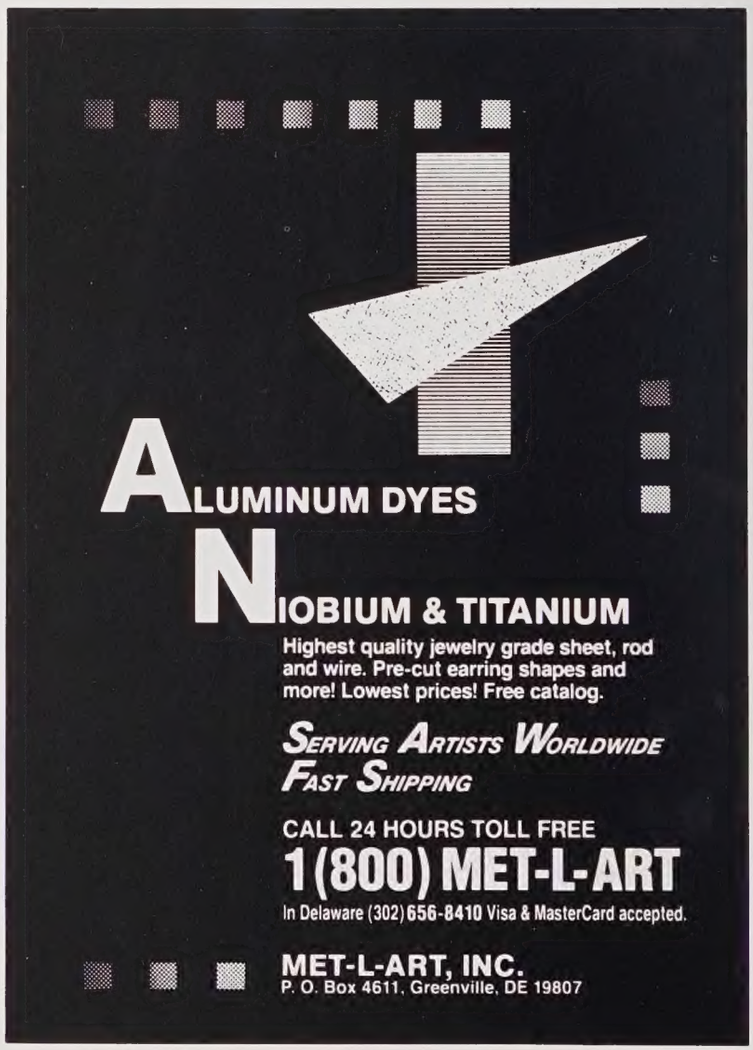
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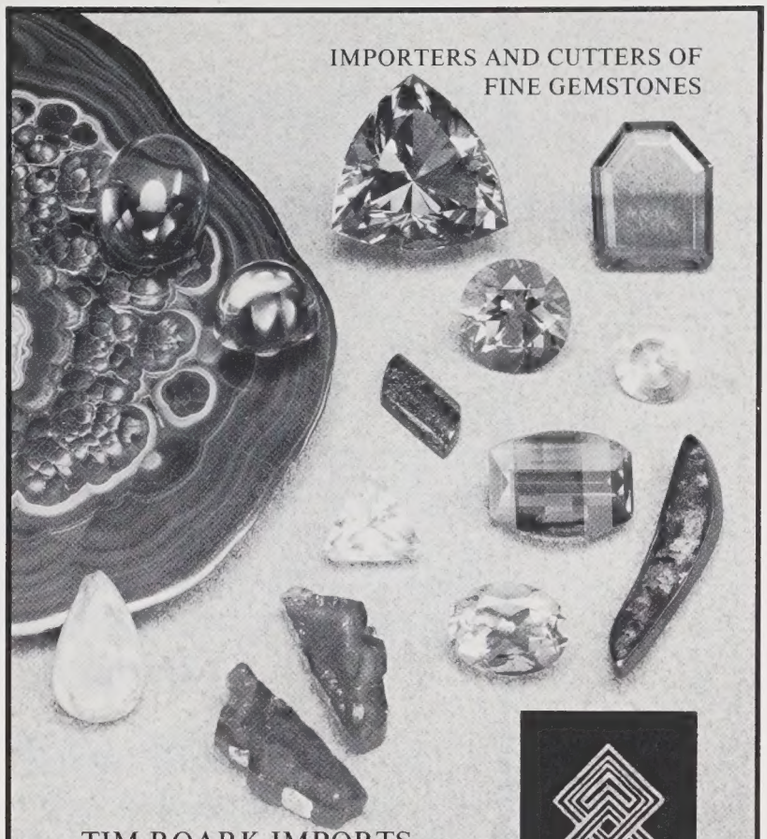

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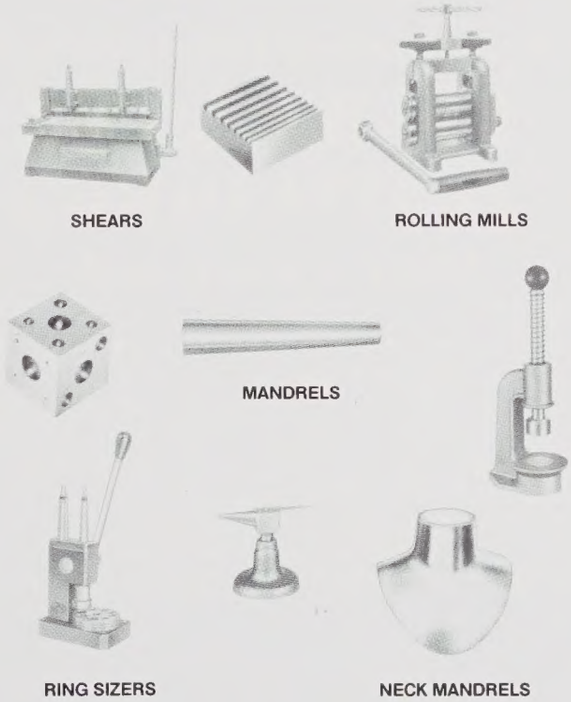

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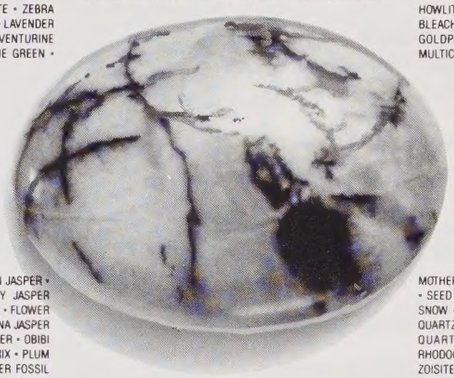

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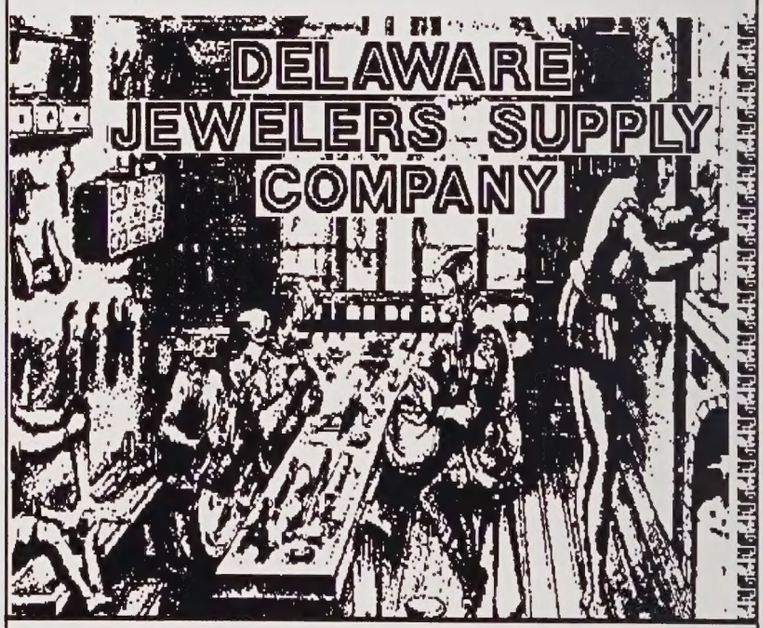

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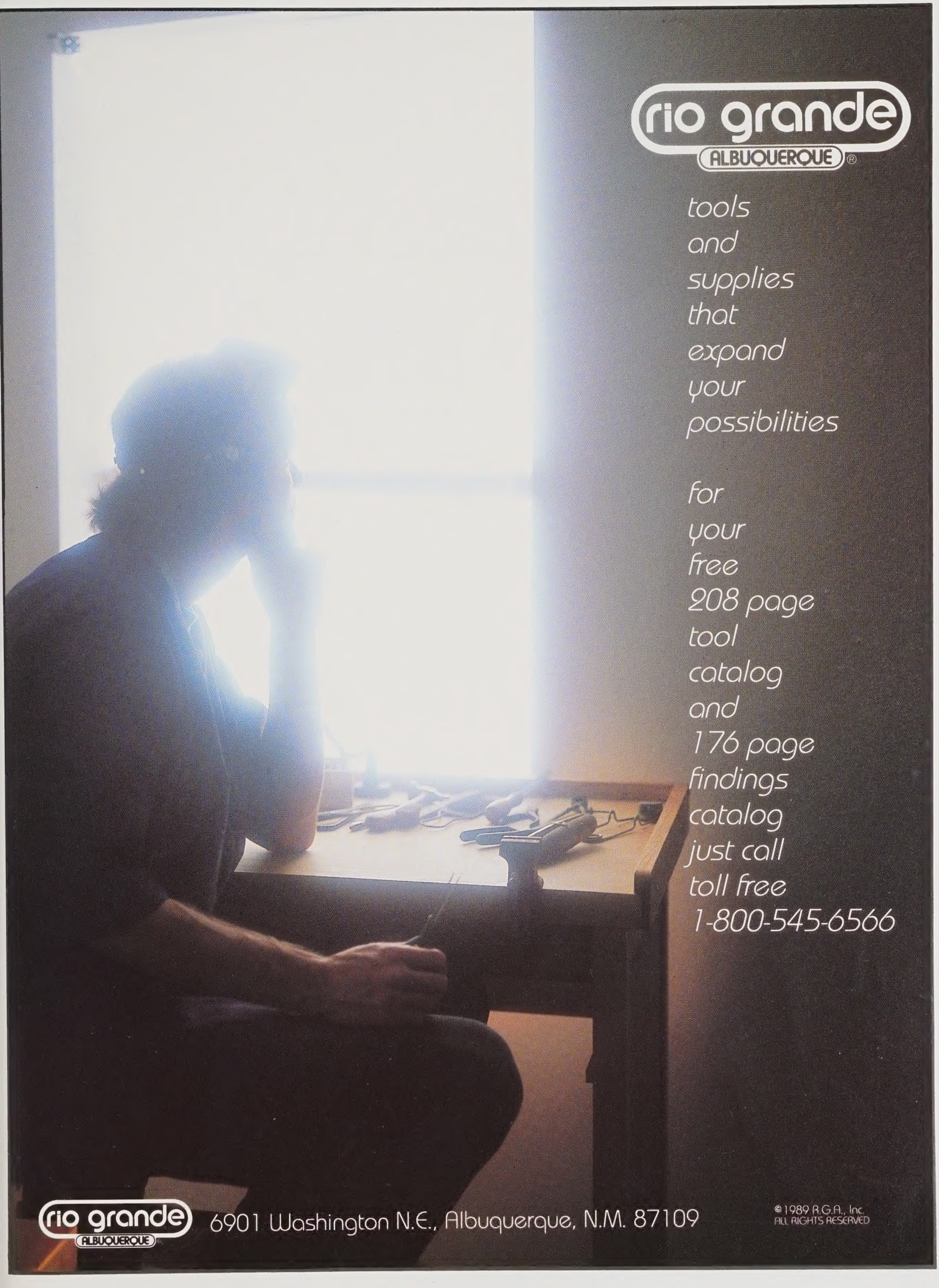
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